

CANON LIDDON'S SERMONS
AT
St Paul's Cathedral



Selected from 'The Penny Pulpit'

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Forty-two sermons on various
subjects



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FORTY-TWO SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL,
LONDON,

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

Canon of St. Paul's.

SELECTED FROM "THE PENNY PULPIT."

THIRD SERIES.

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FOURTY-TWO SERMONS

THE SERMONS

PREACHED BY THE REV. H. P. LIDDOX, D.D.
AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN, LONDON.

REV. H. P. LIDDOX, D.D.

THE SERMONS

THIRD SERIES

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THE THINGS THAT WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME.

A Sermon

By the Rev. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 5TH, 1875.

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope."—Rom. xv. 4.

THIS verse seems to show why to-day's epistle and gospel were chosen to be used together; for, at first sight, they have not much in common. The gospel describes the signs which shall precede Christ's coming to judgment: the epistle presents us with the witness of Jewish prophecy to the privileges reserved for the converted heathen nations in the kingdom and Church of Christ. And this is prefaced by the statement that whatsoever things were written in the bygone ages of Israel were written for the learning of us Christians, that Christians, through the perseverance and comfort which Scripture teaches, might have hope in what is still an anxious future. And here we touch the point of connection between the epistle and the gospel. The future of every soul, the future of the Church, the future of the world, is, as the gospel reminds us, in Christian eyes, confronted by one momentous and assured catastrophe—Christ's coming to judgment. And among the means of preparation for that great event—so the epistle would suggest—is the careful use of those ancient and consecrated writings in which God has unveiled to man His love and His will. Scripture, in short, is here presented to us in one particular aspect. It is a source of that kind of knowledge which kindles, which invigorates hope, and which so enables us to prepare for the future judgment.

Let us consider, first of all, what St. Paul's readers would have understood him to mean. By the scripture, or scriptures, the Roman Christians would not have understood the whole Christian Bible of our day. For them this word meant only the Hebrew sacred writings—the books of the Old Testament, as we call them. With one exception the word "scriptures" is used in this restricted sense throughout the New Testament. When our Lord told the Jews to search the scriptures for in them they thought they had the eternal life, there is no doubt about His meaning the Jewish scriptures; nor yet when He expounded to

His disciples in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself; nor yet when He said, with reference to His death and resurrection, that the scriptures must be fulfilled; nor yet when He sadly observed to the Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures." For the apostles as for the Jews in the days of our Lord's ministry, there were no scriptures save those of the Old Testament; and the word "scriptures" has the same restricted meaning when Apollos is said to have been mighty in the scriptures—when the Bereans are said to have searched the scriptures daily to see whether the things that the apostle said were so—when Timothy is said to have known the holy scriptures from a child—when the scriptures are said to have concluded all men under sin. When all this was said and written, the New Testament itself was only in the process of formation; and it may be questioned whether, when the Church is said by St. Paul to be the witness and keeper of holy writ, or when all scripture is said to be given by the inspiration of God, St. Paul was thinking of the books of the New Testament, although, undoubtedly, when he wrote thus, some of those books were already in circulation. To the apostles, until quite the closing years of their lives, "scripture" meant only the sacred books of the Jews. To the earliest Christian Church the Jewish Bible was *the Bible*. It was the one current, accepted handbook of religious knowledge. It was given—and this is remarkable—not merely to Jewish converts: they had it already. It was given to converts from heathenism; and, to the earliest Church, this Bible, Jewish as it was, spoke of Christ from first to last. He had recently been among men: hundreds were still living who had seen and who had heard Him. But here He had been described by anticipation in a literature which extended over a thousand years, and they could see with their own eyes the points of the correspondence, and could feel its force. St. Matthew's gospel, especially which, as you will remember, insists so carefully on the fulfilment of the Jewish scriptures in our Lord's successive acts and words at each stage of the narrative, was written under the profound influence of this feeling. And St. Paul, in his epistles, uses the Old Testament for present purposes in a precisely similar way. When he would warn the Corinthians against the trials of the Christian life, he refers to the temptations and falls of the Israelites in the desert. When, writing to the Galatians, he is contrasting the Church of Christ—the heiress of the patriarchal promises—with the Jewish nation which had rejected its inheritance in rejecting Christ, he simply recalls the story of Isaac and of Ishmael. When he is seeking a title for God's new people, gathered out of all the nations of the world, he can find nothing better than "the Israel of God." When the awful import of our Lord's death upon the cross has to be stated in familiar terms, St. Paul chooses his words from those of the Jewish ritual of sacrifice. When Christ's ascension is in question, the entrance of the high priest into the Holy of Holies suggests the language which shall describe it. In short, for those first Christians, the Old Testament was a record, not merely of the glories of Abraham, of Moses, of David, but in and through them, and pre-eminently, of the glories of Jesus Christ—not merely of the past annals of Israel, but of the present and of the future of Christendom.

And therefore it was that St. Paul told the Romans that the Jewish scriptures were written for their learning, though they lived in a later age, and on a foreign soil, and under new religious circumstances. If they would, they might get patience, consolation, hope, out of the records of ancient Israel; for what God had been to Israel of old, that He was still—that He ever would be. What He had been to His ancient people, that much more would He be to the new Israel redeemed by the blood of His Son. That history—those examples—those rich and magnificent prophecies had not been set down in the ancient scriptures that they might perish and be forgotten. The times might be dark, and hearts might be heavy; but whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for their learning, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures those first Christians might have hope.

But if St. Paul's words mean this, they also mean much more than this to us. Since the days when the Epistle to the Romans was written, the word "scriptures" has confessedly acquired a new and enlarged meaning. It now

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includes, besides the Old Testament, the twenty-seven books of the New. Although this addition was actually completed within the first century, it was not recognized by Christendom all at once. The Church could not at once understand how great an addition had been made to her treasures. We see the beginning of the process of recognition within the New Testament itself. When St. Peter says that the learned and unstable wrest to their own destruction many things hard to be understood in the epistles of Paul, "as well as in the *other scriptures*," he implies that some epistles of St. Paul are already considered scriptures. But there were many counterfeit writings abroad, and a great deal of sifting had to be gone through if the inspired wheat was to be separated from the uninspired chaff. And thus it came to pass that, as far as can be ascertained now, the four gospels were recognized as four—no more and no less—in the third quarter of the second century; and the whole New Testament canon, as it stands—at least, in the universal Church—in the fourth century. Doubtless it had been largely authoritative from the first. The Church's full recognition did not make it God's work or God's word; but this delay in the recognition of it is a matter of fact, and it is due to a praiseworthy unwillingness to make a mistake in a matter of such vast importance.

But, now, what St. Paul said of the Old Testament we may say of the New—of the whole Christian Bible—not least of those glorious epistles which are St. Paul's own contributions to it. All of these scriptures, new as well as old, are written for the learning of us who live in these later ages. Our business is to make the most of the lesson.

What then, let us ask,—what is the true purpose of holy Scripture? Why was it written? St. Paul replies, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." And what kind of learning? we ask. St. Paul answers again, "That we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have, not merely information, but hope." Scripture, then, is a manual of moral or spiritual learning. It is addressed to the heart and to the will, as well as, or rather than, to the intellect. It is, if you will, a book for the understanding; but, much more, it is a book for the spirit and for the heart. There are, no doubt, many other kinds of learning to be got out of the Bible. It is a great manual of eastern antiquities. It gives us information about the ancient world which we can obtain nowhere else. It carries us back to the early dawn of history, when, as yet, all that we commonly mean by civilisation did not exist. It is a handbook, again, of political experience. It shows us what a nation can do, and what it may have to suffer—how it may be affected by the conduct of its rulers—how it may make its rulers like itself. So, again, it is a rich collection of moral wisdom as applied to personal conduct, and a man need not believe in Divine revelation in order to admire the shrewdness and the penetration of the Book of Proverbs. Again, it is a mine of poetry. It contains the very highest poetry which the human race possesses—poetry before which the great masters of song—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare—must bow—poetry by which, in fact, the two last have been themselves largely inspired. Once more, it is a choice field for the study of language. In its pages we trace one beautiful language—the Hebrew—from its cradle to its grave. And it gives us lessons in the use of language, to describe the emotions and the moods of the human soul, which are not to be found elsewhere. Learning of this kind has its value, of course, and some of it, or rather much of it, is necessary if we are to make the most of this precious book; but it is not *the* learning which St. Paul says that the ancient scriptures were meant to impart to Christians. A man may have much of this learning, and yet he may miss altogether the true lessons that scripture has to teach him. A man may be a good antiquarian and historian and economist—a linguist, a moralist; he may take the keenest interest in scripture because it has so much to say of each and all of these subjects; and yet he may be entirely ignorant of that which, from the apostle's point of view, is the true teaching of scripture. He may read the Bible just as some people, it is to be feared, come to church, to admire the architecture, or to listen to the music, thus missing the very end which these beautiful and useful accessories of worship are intended to promote

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—the communion of the soul with God. Language, history, poetry, antiquities—these are not the subjects which the Bible is primarily intended to teach us, interesting and valuable as they undoubtedly are in their way; for these subjects are taught us in other books, ancient and modern, and by human teachers. The Bible must do something more for us than this, if it is to claim its true, its unique title as “The Book of God.”

“That we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.” That is the end of the highest learning which scripture has to give us, and whatever else we get, we do not get patience, comfort, hope, out of language, or poetry, or political economy, or antiquities, or abstract morality. Scripture teaches, over and above these, something more—something more valuable and more potent—something which does generate patience, comfort, hope; and in this, surely—in this, as a matter of common sense—in this it is well to place our interest,—on this to keep and fix our eyes, even though we should forget the rest. What is—oh! what is this learning, which is the true, the highest, gift of scripture? It is the revelation—the unveiling of God as a living and moral Being, Who knows—Who can supply—all that we need,—Who is what He has always been,—Who will be ever what He is. In His great attributes of righteousness and mercy He is the subject of the Old Testament; in His astonishing intervention on the very scene of human history in the person of His incarnate Son, He is the subject of the New. All that belongs to human life pales before this central and dominant theme of the Bible—God—God as revealed, first partially, then most vividly, most unreservedly, to the soul of man.

And as the Bible is the book of God, so, and for that reason, it is the book of the future. At first sight it seems to be altogether a book of the past. It is made up of ancient history, ancient biographies, ancient poetry, ancient advice about conduct, ancient legislation which has had its day. Nearly eighteen centuries have passed since the last line of it was written, and since then how vast has been the experience of the world—its experience of improvement, and its experience in failure! “Why,” men have asked,—“why should we be invited to look backward instead of looking forward? Why should we expect to wring, by study, out of this old-world chronicle more than can be supplied by that modern literature which embodies our own larger and ever accumulating experience.” Aha! brethren, if the Bible were only a book of the past, this question would be reasonable enough; but, although, undoubtedly, its form is that which was suited to the ancient world, its thought, its substance, are of no one epoch in human history; they belong to all time. For in it God speaks to the soul of man; and this Divine voice is not like an old building, or an old language, bearing upon it the imprint of disuse and of decay: it is always new. From age to age God is the same; He does not change. And from age to age the soul of man is the same; it does not change. And thus, though the Bible be written in an ancient tongue, and in its form speaks to men and to nations which have long passed away, it yet speaks, not less directly, not less searchingly, to us the men of the modern world. There is that in it which is independent of these vicissitudes of form; there is that in it which is as fresh and undying as is the mind and heart of God,—which is as perfectly abreast of the newest thought and of the most daring aspirations of the modern world, as He, the infinite intelligence, could be conceived to be Who made it. “Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven. Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another. Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth and it abideth.” And because the Bible, notwithstanding the antiquity of its form, is a strictly modern handbook which keeps well abreast of the thoughts and of the wants of the modern world, therefore it is also something more; therefore it is the book of the future, for what man now is, that, in the main, he will be in the generations to come; and what God was in the beginning and is now, that He ever shall be world without end. And hence no change in the outward circumstances of human life, or in other departments of human knowledge than this, or in the modes of human thought itself from age to age, can affect the lasting authority and worth of the Bible. It is lifted

—lifted high—out of the reach of these changes, by the simple fact that it has come from God. Its future is assured because its truest and its deepest lessons belong, not to time, but to eternity. If man's destiny ended here, or if the Bible addressed itself only to man's earthly life, the case would be different ; but the Bible addresses man often avowedly—always tacitly—as a being who has a hereafter—who has, in fact, before him nothing less than an illimitable future. And as man gazes out anxiously into this future of which his natural wit and reason have already given him the presentiment—into this unexplored future which stretches away, half indistinctly, ever before him, the Bible does not fail him. On the contrary, it introduces form and outline, distinction and contrast, precise and awful yet blessed certainty, into this region which else would be the land of vague and gloomy anticipations. The Bible is the book of the future, the book of hope. It pierces the veil between this and another life. It takes us by the hand just where nature fails us ; it points us on, if we will only follow its leading, to the realms of light.

There are many other strictly spiritual uses or purposes of scripture, no doubt, beside these—the production and strengthening of hope. It would be true to say that it had been written that we might learn faith or obedience or charity. Indeed they are not uninspired words which say that it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” But the encouragement of hope is what St. Paul here insists on, and for reasons which must be plain to all of us.

My brethren, we need hope. Hope is the nerve—it is the backbone—of all true life, of all serious efforts to battle with evil, and to live for God. For the majority of men—especially as the years pass—life is made up of the disheartening : the sunshine of the early years has gone. The evening is shrouded already with clouds and disappointment. Failure, sorrow, the sense of a burden of past sin, the presentiment of approaching death—these things weigh down the spirit of multitudes. Something is needed which shall lift men out of this circle of depressing thoughts—something which shall enlarge our horizon—which shall enable us to find in the future that which the present has ceased to yield. This need is felt by those thinkers and writers who have little or no respect for the Christian revelation, but who insist largely upon the hope and reality of human progress—of an indefinite good time coming to the world and to humanity. True, when we come to look narrowly at what they have to offer, it does not, considering what man is—it does not amount to much, but at least—and let us recognize it—at least, they do homage to that necessity which is satisfied for Christians in holy scripture—the necessity of a hope set before us, to relieve discouragement, to stimulate effort, to raise the whole level and meaning of life.

And here—let me repeat it—the Bible helps us as no other book does or can. It stands alone as the warrant and the stimulant of hope. It speaks with a Divine authority ; it opens out a future which no human authority could attest. There are many human books which do what they can in this direction, but they can only promise something better than what we have at present on this side the grave. There are many books which do what they can to establish hope on a surer and wider basis : but then, as far as they are trustworthy, they are echoes of the Bible. The Bible is pre-eminently the book of hope. In it God draws the veil which hangs between man and his awful future, and bids him take heart and arise and live.

And in order to make a good use of the Bible, a humble and sensible man will take a guide ; for in this Book of books God's righteousness standeth like the strong mountains, and His judgments are like the great deep. And wise people do not try to climb the Alps alone, or to go to sea on a skiff without a compass. If the Bible were a mere human book, we might easily explore its heights and its depths for ourselves, but precisely because in its essence it is superhuman—superhuman in its substance, superhuman in its moral and intellectual proportions—we may easily lose ourselves—tens of thousands do—in the attempt to explore it. He who gave us the Bible gives

us, in the voice of that early Church which recognized it as being what it is, a guide to its meaning. In her creeds, and in the general consent of her great teachers, we find a clue to the true drift and unity of scripture, not overlaying it with new or foreign matter, but drawing our attention to these elements in it which are of most vital moment, and thus giving us the key to the meaning of all besides. It is often said, probably with too much reason, that we Christians of this day make less use of the Bible than did our forefathers. Perhaps the high pressure of modern life, the increase of periodical literature, the relaxation of the strictness of old social and family habits, may partly account for this. Perhaps religious people have taken to use other books of devotion which leave them little or no time for the sacred Scriptures. However we may account for the fact, if it be a fact, it is a great misfortune. In the life of the soul no book can take the place of the Bible, not even the very choicest of devotional books, such as, "The Imitation of Christ" by À Kempis, or "The Spiritual Combat." In the Bible we handle the one masterpiece of the Holy Spirit in human speech—the one work which human frailty has not been allowed to disfigure with some taint of evil passion or of intellectual error. And the least a good Christian can do is to follow the daily lessons as they are set before us in the service of the Church, so that at the end of the year he may, if he be a devout and attentive reader, have some considerable acquaintance with the general substance of the Bible. But besides this, surely, something more personal should be attempted. The question, "What does the Bible say to me?" should be answered by each man for himself, especially, in order that by patience and comfort of the scriptures we should have hope. We should look out beforehand for the great trials and catastrophes of life, and fix upon and study those passages of the Divine words which will best help us to meet them. For instance, how much of life sooner or later is sorrow? "Man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward." Young people naturally enough do not believe this, excepting, of course, as an authoritative sentence. They have not that conviction of its truth which comes in later life from experience. All goes well with them. With them it is still the *formosissimus annus* of the poet, the spring-time of life, the time of bright sunshine, of singing birds, of opening flowers. There are dark exceptions, no doubt, but a boyhood like that of Louis XVII. of France, in the dungeons of the Temple at Paris, is, thank God, more cheerless and miserable than that even of the mass of poor children who lead the hardest lives in our streets. In those days of high spirits and buoyant strength, it seems as though life would always be bright; and yet how different—how very different—is the reality! Years pass, and, one by one, the early objects of affection are withdrawn; or there are many years of bright and active life, and then comes one crushing blow which darkens everything. In the shadow it is difficult to know what to fall back upon. Men lose their heads; they cannot at a moment's notice create settled convictions. They cannot see the hand which is held out to support and save them. Oh! what a blessing in those days of trial to have already fixed the soul's eye intently on some one passage in the Divine word, such as that in the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—to have put the great red line against it in the Book which we have had ever since we were children—to have again and again read, marked, learnt, inwardly digested it, so that, when the day of sorrow comes, it at once presents itself in the name and with the authority of God to give us the help we need. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children." "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Are not these words, written eighteen centuries since, written for our learning in the dark days of sorrow that we, through the endurance and consolation which the scriptures administer, might have hope?

And then there is that which is worse than sorrow if we only knew it—the burden of sin. Certainly a Christian is supposed, by the terms of his re-

generation, to be deal to sin, so that he can no longer live in it. Certainly he that is born of God sinneth not; and yet, as a matter of fact, if we Christians say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. The regenerate man does not sin so far as he is regenerate. That in him which sins is an active quality or force—a survivor of his old unregenerate nature, which for the moment has got the mastery of his will. Still it is sin all the same, and it is all the worse because it is against light, against grace. Those persons are most deeply to be pitied who so misunderstand the great promises of scripture as to imagine that, do what they may, they cannot sin, since they have a sort of mechanical or physical insurance against it, or, rather, since sin ceases to be itself when they commit it. They have to consider such sentences as this, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." But, to most men of honest heart and intent, to have fallen from grace as David fell, as Peter fell, is to be conscious of loss of insight, loss of strength, loss of the light of God's countenance; and it is misery. The waters have come in upon such a soul: it stands fast in the deep mire where no ground is. The floods have come over it: it is weary of crying: its throat is dry. It is without light, without peace. Ah! in these dark extremities, when there seems to be no outlet—when conscience is hemmed in, as it were, between the accusing fact and the impending judgment—men have sought relief in spiritual numbness by new sins; or they have wildly plunged, by a supreme and irreversible crime, into another state of existence on the threshold of which they must meet their Judge. What would it not have been for such to have spent thought and prayer in past years over that great unveiling of the heart of God—the parable of the prodigal son—a son yet a prodigal—a son, yet so far from his father and his home—a son, yet feeding on the husks that the swine do eat; and then, on those words which sound again from age to age in the souls of all true penitents, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants;" and then on the reception so joyous and so festive in the Father's hall, on the unimagined embrace, on the welcome. Think you, my brethren, that that parable, a true utterance of the heart and mind of the All-merciful, could not now shed a ray of hope into the conscience of any sinner, now that He who uttered it has shed His blood to give it effective power? Truly here is consolation and hope in scripture for those who need and who will have it.

And then, lastly, there is that which awaits us all—the approach of death. To some, indeed, it comes suddenly—so suddenly that there is neither warning nor presentiment. It is the advent of the Son of Man as the thief in the night, as the lightning shineth from the east unto the west. To more—such is God's indulgence—God gives warning of the approach of death—in some cases, many and protracted warnings extending over long periods of life,—over years. These are for the soul the signs of the Son of Man in heaven. These new sensations of weakness and powerlessness—these gradually enforced alterations of daily habit—this importunate, this irrepressible sense of an approaching change—all this is to us what, on a larger scene and scale, will be "the signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and looking for those things that are coming on the earth, while the powers of the heavens are shaken." At such times, when all that is most accustomed is being parted from—when all that has been for years most assured and solid is sensibly giving way—a man needs some patience and comfort of the scriptures—some heaven-sent hope if it is to be had—something that will last as being unyielding and true amid this flux and decay of the passing and the unsubstantial. And if he be in a state of grace, and at peace with and in communion with our Divine Saviour, what can help him better than the burning words which the great Apostle wrote in far-sighted anticipation of the still distant persecutions at Rome in which he was himself to lose his life—those words in which his argument loses itself in a strain of the highest poetry, which yet is the severest truth? "Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Yes, those who will may find, in Holy Scripture, patience, consolation, hope. Not in its literary or historical features, but in the great truths which it reveals about God, about our incarnate Lord, about man—in the great examples it holds forth of patience and of victory, in the great promises it repeats, in the future which it unfolds to the eye of faith, is this treasure to be found. A more constant, more reverent, more thorough use of Holy Scripture, is surely one of the appropriate duties of a season like Advent, for, to use St. Augustin's phrase, "Scripture is a long letter sent to us from our heavenly country," and we who hope in time to reach its shores should learn what we can about it and about the conditions of reaching it, while we may. Thus, indeed, shall we prepare for that event which surely awaits us all—the future judgment—if we shall read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest those Scriptures which God has given for our learning, that by patience and comfort of this His Holy Word we embrace and hold fast that hope of everlasting life which He has given us in and with His adorable Son.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO PUBLIC OPINION.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 12TH, 1875.

"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord."—1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

THIS is plainly the language of a man who knows that he is exposed to sharp and unfriendly criticism, and such was St. Paul's case when among the Christians at Corinth. There were some busy persons at work among them, by whom everything that the Apostle did or said was misrepresented. These persons, although Christians, were themselves, for the most part, anxious to retain as much as they could of the observance of the old Jewish ceremonial law, and they resented St. Paul's frequent assertion that, in typifying the work of Christ, it had done all that it could do and was now useless, or rather, in the way. Besides which, as this epistle says, there was much going on in the Corinthian Church which called for a sharp exercise of the apostolical authority. There was one case of incest which the apostle says that heathen pagan morals would have condemned. There was disbelief, on grounds derived from the Greek philosophy, of the cardinal Christian doctrine of the resurrection. There was gross irreverence at the celebration of the holy sacrament arising from its being closely associated with the primitive agape or love-feast; and less important questions, of the desirableness of marriage under certain circumstances—of the relative importance of some unusual gifts of the Holy Spirit, even of the head-dress worn by the Corinthian ladies—were keenly discussed. We all know that the exercise of authority creates opposition, and at Corinth, as in Galatia, St. Paul's opponents were active and unscrupulous. They sug-

gested that he had no true apostolical commission at all—that he was working with no such credentials as had the great Apostles at Jerusalem—that these Apostles were in reality opposed to him. They played off against him at one time the authority of St. Peter, whom they called, for the sake of greater veneration, by his old Syriac name of Cephas,—at another, the Alexandrian learning and eloquence of Apollos,—at another, the most sacred name of all—that of the Divine Master. And they succeeded, it would seem, in creating a body of public opinion against St. Paul in the Corinthian Church, which by the time that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written, had become really formidable, and at this earlier date was already troublesome. And by this hostile opinion, engaged as it was in an incessant round of observation and of gossip, the Apostle was severely judged. He was perfectly well aware of all that was going on, and accordingly when, as in this chapter, he is discussing the claims of the Apostles of Christ upon the obedience and love of Christians, and when he has laid it down, as a first requisite in a steward of the Christian mysteries, that a man should be found faithful, he feels at once, and instinctively, that this very quality of faithfulness was exactly what a great many of the busy and talkative people at Corinth would deny to himself. And, thus, he adds the words, “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self.”

Observe, my brethren, first of all, that St. Paul was judged unfavourably at this time at the bar of the public opinion of the Church of Corinth. And this leads us to dwell for a few minutes on the nature and authority of what we call public opinion. What do we mean by the expression? It describes the common fund of thought which belongs to a larger or smaller number of associated human beings. No sooner are men formed into a society than, in order to keep this society together, its members instinctively create—I might say secrete—a certain deposit of thought and feeling about their common interests, and to this deposit everybody contributes something, and by it everybody is tacitly understood to be in some sense bound. Society cannot be kept together merely by the outward bands and buttresses of law. It needs the inward sympathies which a common body of thought creates in its members, and this common stock of thought or sentiment varies both in point of intensity and in point of character with the nature of the society. Thus, every family has its public opinion, that is to say, its peculiar way of looking at the persons with whom it comes into contact—at the events of the time—at the questions of general interest—at the interests which more immediately and exclusively concern itself. Thus, every village, every town, every city, has its public opinion—its own characteristic way of dealing with people and things about it; sometimes addressing itself, perhaps, in some Devonshire hamlet, to the most trivial issues, and sometimes, as in this metropolis, to matters of even imperial interest. And, again, classes and professions have each a public opinion of their own, which, in some cases, is very tyrannical and exacting. And, above all these, there rises the larger public opinion which encircles and comprehends them all—to which they all contribute, and by which they are each in turn checked and controlled in respect of that in them which is narrow and peculiar, I mean the public opinion of the country. And this we all know, when it is roused, and expresses itself distinctly, is nothing less than a tremendous force. And yet it is not the largest and ultimate form of public opinion, for as civilisation advances, and the nations see and know more and more of each

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other, there is a constant tendency to form and to consolidate a yet wider range of general opinion than this—opinion which eliminates from itself all that is merely national—opinion which aims at being that of the world—at least of the civilised world. This world-wide opinion will probably be more felt and energetic in the days to come than it is now. But to it, as to the opinion of the country, and to the opinion of the classes, and districts, and professions, and places, which make up the country, we all of us contribute in our various ways, and by it in different degrees—unconsciously, it may be, to ourselves—we are individually controlled.

And, as earthly societies, so Churches have a public opinion of their own, first created by their members, and which in turn controls them. By this I do not mean the faith or creed which the universal Church and all true branches of it have received from God. That rests upon God's authority, and that, in Christian estimate, can never be a matter of mere opinion. But outside this there is a large margin of questions connected with the progress and administration of the Christian society, and with the acts and the conduct of its several members, upon which the opinion of Christians is incessantly taking form. And this public Church opinion is by no means certain to be always and everywhere just. St. Paul stood face to face with a section of this opinion at Corinth when he wrote, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment."

Remark, secondly, that St. Paul is not at pains to conceal his perfect independence of the hostile opinion of the Corinthians; not that we can suppose him to have taken any pleasure either in feeling or in proclaiming this independence, for he was a man of quick sympathy, rejoicing if he could be sure of the love of his converts, and not caring to conceal how much they could do to promote or to mar his personal happiness. But, as matters stood, he brushed aside a whole world of inward feeling to say that he was unconcerned as to their judgment upon his apostolical faithfulness. He could not hope to be of service to them unless he was perfectly unaffected by their prejudices. He was most likely to serve them if he told them so. It is sometimes assumed, my brethren, that whenever a man defies public opinion he must necessarily be right, because this act of defiance requires a certain amount of courage and resolution. But that this is a very rash assumption, a moment's consideration will show. A man, for instance, who is eccentric to the verge of madness, may defy public opinion, not in the interests of truth or virtue, nor yet, necessarily, in the interest of vicious passion, but simply by way of giving play and fling to his personal eccentricity. And, in all possibility, public opinion will smile good-naturedly at such defiance as this, and, by making the man a privileged person whose oddities shall be rated on all hands at their real value, will pass good-naturedly on. But a criminal also may be at war with public opinion: indeed, he cannot help being so when he is discovered, for public opinion asserts so much of moral truth as is necessary to keep society together, and a criminal, to use that word in its usual restricted sense, offends against some part of that moral truth which society, in self-defence affirms. A bandit, or a pickpocket, or a forger, or a murderer, defies the public opinion of any civilised society as much as he defies the law of God. So far as he is concerned, the law of God and public opinion are, for the time being, in harmony with each other. It has, indeed, been implied, as in a famous sketch of the life of Christ by a German writer, that, because the Divine

Prophet of Nazareth was in conflict with the dominant opinion of his day and country, therefore all modern forms of antagonism to social institutions are probably right. If that were true, Barabbas certainly was also entitled to an encomium in the pages of the evangelists, and it would be hard to show that the teaching of Jesus Christ is a blessing to the social life of man. No, brethren, St. Paul was not, therefore, right because he was opposed to Corinthian opinion. He opposed Corinthian opinion because, as against it, he was certainly right. The truth is, ordinary public opinion, looked at on its moral or religious side, is, from the nature of the case, a compromise. It affirms just so much moral or religious truth as, in a given state of things, will keep society together—so much and no more. It affirms not the whole law of God, but an extract from it—just so much of it, in fact, as is likely to be useful for social purposes. Thus, at the present day, English public opinion strictly condemns murder, and punishes it with death; and, in this, it is in accordance with the Divine law. But it also permits the “marriage” (so to term it under protest) of divorced persons—a proceeding which our Saviour Himself has, in express terms, condemned. And the reason is that murder is rightly supposed to be destructive of society, which demands assured safety of life for all its members, while people do not see far enough to perceive that society will, in the end, be wounded, ay, in the very vitals, if human passions of another order are permitted to shelter themselves under the sanction of the civil law. And thus, you observe, public opinion strikes an average between the impulses which it receives from above, and the impulses which it receives from below—between the good and the bad elements in human society. And the criminal makes war with public opinion because he is below it. The true Christian is at issue with it, because he is above it. It floats between the two, as the result of contributions from the lowest and the best elements in the great mass of men; and while it protects those who obey it against gross excesses, it fails to guide them safely if they have caught sight of a higher ideal—if they have any desire to make teaching, like that of our Lord and his Apostles, a serious reality to them. It was in this sense that St. Paul was opposed to public opinion in the Church of Corinth. That opinion was altogether below him. It was bent on a course which, had it been successful, would have taken the heart out of apostolic Christianity, by virtually denying the sufficiency of the value and virtue of the Redeemer's sacrifice—by restricting the universal Church within merely national frontiers. St. Paul did not really care how he was judged by a public opinion intent on such purposes as this. “With me,” he said, “it is a small thing that I should be judged by you, or of man's judgment.”

And this brings us to a third point, namely, what was the consideration which sustained St. Paul in his conscious opposition to the opinion of the Corinthian Christians; for, under such circumstances, even he would have felt the need of a sustaining motive. Inspired Apostle, as he was, he yet was subject to the usual conditions of human conduct. Infallible as a public teacher, he yet might err in action, as we know St. Peter himself did in action make mistakes. What was it which upheld him when Corinth was saying that he was unfaithful—that there were other and greater apostles than he, whose conduct condemned him—that in reality he was far from being what his name and his profession might suggest? My brethren, let me for one moment repeat it. It is, I apprehend, certain that a good man will always

admit difference from general opinion, whether of his Church, or of his country, with extreme reluctance ; for he cannot but reflect that society, whether it be civil or sacred society, is invigorated and supported by agreement of thought and feeling among its members ; and further, that agreement among men is, within limits, a presumption that those who thus agree are right. To a good man it can never be a pleasure to find that he differs from other people, because he knows that this difference of itself means social and moral weakness, and that one of the parties who differ must be wrong. The evangelical precepts about having an eye even to the judgment of the heathen world—"As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"—"Provide things honest in the sight of all men"—"Avoid even the appearance of evil"—these imply that, when no higher interests are compromised, a Christian will do his best to be, and to keep, in harmony with the common opinion of his fellow men, under whatever forms of association he may meet them. But there are times and circumstances when such agreement is impossible, and this was St. Paul's case with respect to the Corinthian Church. He heard, as it were, though he was in a distant land, the hum of unfriendly voices which pronounced him a faithless steward of the Divine mysteries, and he solemnly bade it defiance. Not in petulance or bitterness—not in contempt or scorn—not in sullen obstinacy, or in measured indignation, did the great Apostle utter the words, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." He spoke as from a higher atmosphere which was already moving him out of the reach of those human voices. He spoke as from the vestibule of a Divine presence-chamber. He spoke, I might almost say, out of another world. He was in spirit with God. Prostrate before the All-holy, he did not venture to judge himself. He knew nothing by, or against himself, so far as those matters were concerned which furnished the popular accusations at Corinth ; but he did not feel that his ignorance was the certificate of his acquittal. The all-surveying Being, before Whom his whole life lay spread like a river—from its very source down to the point where it loses itself in the ocean—he saw deeper, farther, more truly, than His servant. He felt that in his own mysterious being there were hidden motives, there were unsuspected depths, which one eye alone could fathom. "I know nothing against myself," said he, "yet am I not hereby justified ; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." The All-seeing, he knew, was also All-merciful, and if there was that in His servant which invoked His displeasure, there was that in himself which would cancel the provocation. At least, God knew the purity of his Apostle's intentions, whatever might have been his failures in fact : and a sense of this Divine judgment always and unerringly forming itself over his life, moment by moment, in the Infinite mind, made the Apostle feel, not so much the pettiness, as the waste and aimlessness, of those human judgments which were formed and uttered so constantly and so confidently by the Corinthian Christians. He had prayed, we may be sure, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." And he had known already what it was to be hidden privily in God's own presence from the provoking of all men, and to be kept secretly in His tabernacle from the strife of tongues.

There can, I apprehend, be no doubt that any one who wishes to serve God must expect, sooner or later, to be judged hardly by the public opinion of his family, or of his circle of acquaintances, or of his town, or of his country, as

the case may be ; for to be loyal to so much moral truth as will keep society together, is one thing, and to serve a holy God is quite another. And as average public opinion crushes those whose criminal acts or words would, if they could, destroy society, so, on the other hand, it secretly or openly, resents the higher lives of those who are not content with just so much of truth and of righteousness as is socially useful, but who desire to have as much of both as they can. So it has always been, and human nature does not change. Noah in the antediluvian world, Lot in Sodom, Abraham in the distant east, Moscs, whether at the court of Egypt, or in the camp of Israel, the great representative prophets—Isaiah and Jeremiah under bad Jewish sovereigns, Ezekiel among impenitent captives, Daniel ministering around a heathen throne—these, and hundreds of others, were condemned by the opinion of their contemporaries. And our Lord warned Christians that, in this respect, no change was to be expected as the result of His advent. The old rule would obtain in the future, even more decisively than in the past,—“ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” And thus His Apostle concludes that whoever would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. And thus it has been ever since. The Apostles themselves were at war with public opinion. They were told plainly that the cause they represented was everywhere spoken against. They found as little sympathy among the cultivated sceptics who were then at the head of Jewish society, as among the fanatical and ignorant populace at its base. And the history of all the martyrs is a history of this conflict with public opinion pushed to the very last extremity. The public opinion of the great heathen empire killed criminals with one hand and saints with the other. It has been said that for two centuries, at least, as much satisfaction was given by the death of a Christian bishop, or a Christian matron, as by that of a rebel or murderer. And even when the Roman empire became Christian by profession, the old conflict lasted on in a different form, not now between Christians and heathens, but between downright Christians and Christians in name. And this has gone on ever since down to our own time. As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

But before a man steels himself, after the Apostle's fashion, against the judgment even of a section of his fellow-men, he ought to be very sure of his ground. It is a bold, and, in some respects, a dangerous thing to say to a body of one's fellow-creatures—still more to a body of one's fellow Christians—“ With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you.” To say this out of bad humour, or, in a fit of obstinacy,—to make a creed of a personal prejudice—a point of morals out of a matter of fancy, and then in this poor guise to hold the language of an apostolical combatant, is a folly which must lead to failure and confusion. And a man may defy the world, even in the name of the absolute truth, without thereby imitating St. Paul. He may hold truth, not as God's voice and gift, but as a personal prejudice or possession of his own. He may think more of what is due to himself who holds it, than to the Being Who gave it. He may hold it, not as a blessing for all whom it reaches, but as an intellectual weapon with which His servants may smite those who do not hold it. He may wrap himself in a shroud of self-complacency which thanks God that in this, as in other respects, He is not as

other men are. And however accurate and complete his hold on truth may be, he may only, after all, reproduce the temper not of the Apostle who preached Christ, but of the Pharisee who rejected Him.

But when it is once clear in conscience that such opposition to dominant opinion is necessary, then there is every reason for determined and unflinching perseverance, for on the one side is human weakness, and on the other is the strength of God. On the one side is human error, and on the other the truth that cannot lie. On the one side there is the Prince of martyrs Who, faint and bleeding, has just proclaimed, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth;" and on the other there is the multitude, as we heard this afternoon, crying out "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" To give way to the threat or to the frown which represents nothing that a man can in his heart respect, is to be a slave and a coward. Just so far as a man is loyal to known truth and known duty, does he assert his manhood, and, not in petulance or in scorn, not in indifference or in anger, he is thereby raised, though he be raised upon a cross—raised above the opinion of the world. It is a small thing that he is judged unfavourably by it, because, in that higher presence, he dares not judge himself at all, and yet he believes his intentions to be accepted by the justice and the charity of his God.

To conclude, St. Paul's words might well be the guide of two classes of persons and the motto of a third.

I have mentioned the martyr, but take the not uncommon instance of the public man who is convinced that a particular line of conduct and legislation is for the true interest of his country. He hopes that his countrymen will gradually learn to share his convictions. He waits: he is disappointed. His hold upon the country becomes weaker and weaker. The judgments which are formed of him become more and more unfavourable: possibly they become more and more unjust. Power is slipping from his grasp, and before him there is obscurity, perhaps disgrace. There are, it may be, documents in existence, which, if they could be published, would at once restore the confidence which he is losing; but then, for reasons of public policy, they cannot be published for some fifty years. They will only vindicate his memory to a coming generation. He whispers to himself for a moment, with the poet of the Greek games, "The days which come after are the wisest witnesses;" and yet he checks himself. No, they are not the wisest; there is a present living witness of his intentions, with whom he has already pleaded his cause and won it—One who will hereafter make his righteousness as clear as the light, and his just dealings as the noonday. And in the strength of this profound conviction—"He that judgeth me is the Lord," as he passes from the public scene, such a man can look out upon the nation which is condemning and dismissing him, to cry with the Apostle and to cry in his spirit, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

And if the words thus express intrepid devotion to known truth of any kind, they are equally the language of devotion to known duty. Look at that young man who, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, has just come up to London to begin life. He has left a simple country home where settled habits and warm-hearted friends made the path of duty and of virtue easy and welcome. He finds himself in one of those vast establishments, which are the symbol and the pride of our commercial enterprise as a people, and of which not a few may be

visited within one hundred yards of this cathedral. He finds himself among three or four hundred companions of his own age. He is the member of a society, complete in itself, with a public opinion of its own—an opinion to which generations of his predecessors have contributed. What does that opinion recommend? What does it sanction? What does it condemn? If he is going to cling unflinchingly to what he knows to be right,—if he is going to resist at any cost what he knows to be wrong,—if he is going by God's grace to lead a true and pure life,—if he is to continue to say his prayers, to read his Bible, to attend church worship—let us hope to communicate, as heretofore—he will have to reckon sooner or later with that opinion around him. Many a young man, I know, would go bravely through the fire who cannot stand ridicule; and ridicule is the weapon by which a narrow and rude public opinion implacably asserts, or tries to assert, its empire. Sooner or later, that man will have to say, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Let him remember that there are two spirits in which those words may be uttered—the spirit of the Pharisee, and the spirit of the Christian—the spirit of St. Paul. Let him remember that God does judge him. He cannot say with the Apostle, "I know nothing against myself." He can with the Apostle hide himself from the hard words and looks of men, in the infinite patience and love of God—his true and rightful judge—his assured friend if he be faithful.

And the words are a motto for the dead. That first sentence, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment," may fitly be traced upon a tombstone. There is an old proverb, "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*,"—"Do not let us say hard things about the dead." That proverb, I fear, is not much in favour now. Too often a man's death unchains tongues which would not have dared, during his lifetime, to say anything in his dispraise. And after the usual conventionalisms have been wreathed around his coffin, there is a pause, and lo, his memory is the object of some passionate invective. Still, I repeat it, do not let us say hard words, against the dead. Why not? Not because we know not whether the dead may not hear what we say, for we ought to be willing to say into a man's ear what we say of him when he is out of earshot; but because the dead have been already judged by an unerring tribunal: they have already, immediately after death, passed to the foot of the eternal throne. They have learnt what awaits them at the general judgment. To them the guesswork of human judgments, be they good or bad, must appear to be unspeakably trifling, for they have felt what it is to stand face to face with the awful infallibility of the eternal Judge. What matters it to them how the current of criticism deals on earth with their acts and words, the memory of which yet may linger for a year or two on that little planet which they have left? Those very words and acts have been passed in review by the unerring Judge, and let us hope they have taken refuge in the hope set before them by His atoning love. Surely, with them it is a very small thing that they should be judged by any human judgment. They judge not in that world their own selves; they know too much against themselves. They are herein justified, if justified at all, by the fact that He Who is their Judge is their Redeemer.

Brethren, there are two judgments about us always being formed—the human and the Divine. Let us not ignore—let us not despise—man's judgment. Let us never fear it: let us never flatter it. Not to be needlessly at issue with it is surely our happiness as well as our duty. But if it may be sometimes right, it is on the gravest subjects likely to be mistaken. There is another judgment which never is capricious, and never deceived. His judgment: Who can never err—the judgment of that all-surveying Being "unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid"—He judges us now, but we also believe that He will come to be our judge. Let us, while we may, take refuge from His justice in the depths—in the inexhaustless depths—of His mercy. Let us pray Him to help His servants, whom He has Himself redeemed with His precious blood, to make them to be numbered with His saints in glory everlasting.

JOY IN THE LORD.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 19TH, 1875.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say rejoice."—PHIL. iv. 4.

OF all the epistles of St. Paul, this to the Philippians is the brightest. It was indeed written out of a Roman prison, and it touches upon some depressing events, such as the recent illness of Epaphroditus,—the disagreement between the ladies Euodias and Syntyche,—the general want of disinterestedness in persons about the Apostles. "All seek their own," he exclaims, "not the things that are Jesus Christ's,"—the way in which some of the missionaries in Rome preached Christ, even out of envy and strife, besides the personal discomfort which was inseparable from his own circumstances. And yet such was the happy state of the Philippian Church that alone among St. Paul's epistles this contains no word of censure for those to whom it is addressed ; and throughout it there is an undercurrent of buoyant thankfulness and hope which, from time to time, bursts upwards in such exclamations as that of the text—"Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say rejoice."

The Apostle had already written, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord ;" but, as if this were not enough, he must repeat the precept—"Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say rejoice." And thus this epistle of his has had a particular attraction for Christians, who have felt the pressure, whether of duty or of sorrow, at all severely. And among these I may mention one who certainly was a great student of holy Scripture in its practical aspects—the late Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Hamilton. He used to say that when he felt depressed or discouraged he found it best to read the Epistle to the Philippians through as soon as he could make time to do it ; for, in this letter of the great Apostle, more than anywhere else in the sacred volume, he found sustaining force and motives which helped him on his

way. And it is not hard to see why this passage from the Epistle has its place in the services of this, the last Sunday in Advent ; for we are now very near the great festival of the birth of Christ. We are pausing, as pilgrims have described themselves as pausing, on the hills around Jerusalem to prepare for their entrance into the holy city. We are waiting for the sunrise ; and already the horizon is brightening with the splendour that precedes the sun. Christmas, though not the greatest of the Christian festivals, is yet scarcely inferior to Easter ; while the custom of western Christendom, and of our own country in particular, has made it more joyous. Not merely is the season dear to every Christian heart that feels something of the lovingkindness of God, as shown by sending His Divine Son into our human world, but all lawful human joys—all family relationships—all that brings light and sweetness into our natural life—finds shelter, sanction, consecration, in the stable at Bethlehem. Joy, in short, is the key-note of the festival of Christmas, and, therefore, in immediate preparation for it, the last Sunday in Advent heralds this joy, but, at the same time, insists on its true source and motive. It undertakes to regulate as well as to stimulate it. "Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say rejoice."

My brethren, all the emotions and passions of the human soul find their most legitimate exercise, and their complete satisfaction, in the service of God. Bishop Butler has, in a famous sermon, shown that this is true of anger or resentment—anger is so almost invariably roused for selfish or for sinful purposes, that we are apt to regard any exercise of it whatever as wrong, and to forget that God gave it to us to be employed in His service and for His glory. There are certain actions which ought to make us angry. One of the darkest touches which the Psalmist throws into the character of a bad man is that "neither doth he abhor anything that is evil." One of the most urgent of the apostolic precepts to Christians is, "Be ye angry and sin not." And in the same way, wonder, awe, gratitude, affectionateness, and the like, though they are often roused by very unworthy objects, have each of them one legitimate object in which they find their perfect satisfaction—one object, Almighty God—a satisfaction in Him which they do not find except in very imperfect and unsubstantial shapes anywhere beneath His throne. For God has made the human soul and every instinct and faculty that composes it, for Himself. He alone is the key to unlock its varied and mysterious powers,—to discover their true range and capacity. And as this is the case with other emotions and powers and faculties, so it is with the emotion of joy. Joy, undoubtedly—that active sense of happiness which caresses the object that provokes it—which seeks some outlet or expression for its buoyancy,—joy has an immense field of modified exercise in the sphere of sense and time. And Scripture recognises this in a hundred ways. To the counsellors of peace there is joy. It is joy to the just to do judgment. A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth. The virgin, in Jeremiah, rejoices in the dance ; and Isaiah speaks of the joy of harvest, and of the rejoicing of men after victory who divide the spoil. And Solomon observes that folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom. And St. James knows of Christians who rejoice in their boastings ; and then he adds tersely, "all such rejoicing is evil."

The range of joy is almost as wide as that of human thought and human enterprise. Its complete satisfaction is only to be found in God. God is the "exceeding joy" of the Psalmist. God is the one Object Who can draw out and give play to the soul's capacity for active happiness. And therefore the Psalmist's heart danceth for joy, and his mouth praiseth God with joyful lips. And he bids the

children of Zion be joyful in their King. And he looks out upon heathendom, and would have all the lands, if it were possible, make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. And he looks out upon nature, and he bids the field be joyful, and all that is in it, and the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; and the floods are to clap their hands, and the hills are to be joyful together (as in this afternoon's psalm) before the Lord. This is the language of exuberant delight, and St. Paul is only adopting the expressions of the Psalmist, of Isaiah, of Joel, of Habakkuk, of Zechariah, when he bids the Philippians "rejoice in the Lord."

Now this joy is first of all intellectual. The human reason has its profound satisfactions, its ecstasies, its moments of bounding, inexpressible delight. "Why do you sit up so late at night?" was a question once put to an eminent mathematician. "To enjoy myself" was the reply. "How?" was the rejoinder: "I thought you did nothing but spend the night in working out mathematical problems." "So I do," was the reply. "In the working out of those problems consists the enjoyment. Depend upon it," he added, "those persons lose a form of enjoyment, too keen and sweet to be at all described, who do not know what it is to recognise at last, after long effort and various failures, the true relation which exists between two mathematical formulæ." Well, my brethren, that is probably a form of enjoyment to which you and I are strangers; and yet we may well know enough of other subjects to believe in its reality, for, in different degrees, all real knowledge is delightful to the human mind for the same reason which makes pure mathematics so peculiarly delightful. All real knowledge involves contact with fact, with truth. Why is this contact so welcome to the mind of man? Because the mind is made for God, the truth of all truths, the one ultimate and supreme fact, the absolute Being Who is the meeting-point of all that really is, in Whom, as manifested in His Word or Son, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And, in our day, this delight of the human mind in coming into contact with fact is especially observable in the study of nature in its various aspects. The scientific spirit, as it is called, is at present almost concentrated upon these studies with passionate eagerness, and in themselves they are deserving of a warm welcome from Christians; for, if revelation is God's second book, nature is His first. Nature, according to the Apostle, was the book which God had opened before the eyes of the heathen world, and men were not to gather His existence by a laborious process of argument and inference, but to read stamped upon its every page His being, His power, His beauty, the resource, the many-sidedness of His life. "The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." And if this wonderful lesson is so often missed—if a film would seem to be drawn over the eyes of some of those who see deepest into the processes of nature, so that they see nothing of the mind and hand which is everywhere behind, or, rather, ever moving upon her surface, this does not show that the study is, in itself bad, but only that some inward disability prevents their making the most of it. The student of nature, whether he knows it or not, is animated by that love of contact with truth which makes knowledge of the highest truth a source of the highest and the purest enjoyment.

And if this be so,—if the contact of the mind with fact, with reality, has thus a charm which is all its own, what should not be the delight of steadily contemplating God as He presents Himself before us in His revelation? In revelation the Being, the perfections, the life of God, are spread out before us men, like a

boundless ocean, that we may rejoice in Him alway as the only, the perfect satisfaction of our intellectual nature. This Being of beings, to Whom nothing can be added because nothing is wanting—Whom no place, nor time, nor will, nor intelligence can contain—Who fills, penetrates, transcends all created things, Himself uncircumscribed, unbounded life,—this Being upon Whose nature a shadow of change never rests,—Whose essence, thought, heart, will, working, are alike unchanging and unchangeable—this Being Who never began, Who never will cease to be—Whose existence knows no succession, no division of times, but includes in one single point of an indivisible eternity all the duration and divisions that belong to time, so that with Him each moment is eternity, and eternity is as a moment—this Being Whose power is limited only by His own moral nature,—Who knows not what we men name infirmity or fatigue,—Who has created this universe out of nothing,—Who could, with equal readiness, resolve it into the nothing out of which He has taken it, since He momentarily upholds it in the existence which He has bestowed—this unbounded, this vast intelligence in which darkness and ignorance can find no place,—which can never err, can never be deceived,—before which all that is, is spread out in its widest extent and in its minutest detail—all things or occurrences, I say, whether past, or present, or to come—all that is possible, and all that is imaginable, all that is not, yet might be, as well as all that is,—this awful will—perfect in its power, in its freedom, in its sanctity, which yet ever wills and loves the good, because the good is its nature, and this so perfectly that the presence of evil itself in the world is but a weird product of its love of the highest good in the creature,—this awful will which is ever the same in its principle, and in its direction, yet which, as it is face to face with evil or with good, actual or possible, we name, by turns, “justice” or “mercy,” but always “goodness,”—surely here is a being, in contemplating Whom the intelligence of man might well rejoice. Nor is this all. He has not merely thus revealed Himself as an all-embracing intelligence, and as a perfectly holy will. “My reason tells me,” it once was said, “that before He created anything the Maker of this universe must have dwelt in an eternal solitude;” but my experience shows me that, at least for a created being, solitude means madness. The mind cannot, dare not, beyond a certain point, feed upon itself. And here as man gazes back into that past eternity—gazes at what to him is the unintelligible—God again lifts the veil, and he discovers, in that solitary existence which preceded creation, the activities of an infinite life which had not yet passed beyond the circuit of its own being. Not alone, as we men think of solitude, but as three in the unity of Himself-existent being, God existed in those past eternities. Long ere He created, to use poor human words, God was as He is—as He ever will be—the centre and sphere of an unbegun, unending productiveness. As in the beginning was God, so in the beginning was the Word. A plant slowly develops itself till it bears its flowers, its fruit. Man passes the long years of boyhood or of youth, ere he becomes a parent; but God, the everlasting Being, ever begets within Himself, an everlasting Word or Son; and from Son and Father there is everlastingly breathed forth a Spirit, the bond of love that unites them. This generation of the Son—this going forth of the Spirit from the Father, and the Son—always has been,—is at this moment,—ever will be. This never-begun, never-ending activity within the Divine Being never impairs His unity. The same inseparable nature belongs to Father, Son, and Spirit. They remain, each possessing, without dividing, this common uncreated essence. Each contains the others; each is in the others; so that there is perfect unity, and yet this unity is not a barren solitude, for within

it subsist, in eternal unimaginable companionship, without being separated, without being confused, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Alas ! how can poor human words trace the distant outline, the remote frontier, of the greatest subject that can possibly present itself to the intelligence of man,—the being of the everlasting God. And yet a new plant flowering in your botanical gardens,—a newly-discovered animal secured for your menageries,—a sea-fish or octopus in your aquariums, will send a thrill of interest through those sections of society which claim to represent the most active thought of the day. And all the while the Being of beings, with all the magnificent array of His attractive and awful attributes, is above you, around you ; ay, He is within you ; and how much of that mental life, which you bestow so ungrudgingly on His creatures, is given to Him ? Surely that is a question, my brethren, which deeply concerns not a few of us men of this present generation. As we give, methinks, our time and strength to art, to science, to politics, to business,—as the hours, the few hours, which are allotted to us here are passed so almost exclusively in dealing with topics and publications of the day, which have little or no reference, except in the way of some distant controversy, to the Absolute and the Eternal Being—we seem to hear the great Apostle paraphrasing His own words. “O intelligence of man, that was made for something higher than any created thing, understand at last, before it is too late, thy magnificent destiny ! Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say rejoice.”

And this joy in the Lord is, secondly and pre-eminently moral. It is the active satisfaction experienced by a created moral nature, at coming into contact with the uncreated and perfect moral being ; for God, we know, is not merely a self-existent being ; He is not merely resistless force, or boundless intelligence. He is, as we have already said, sanctity, justice, goodness, mercy. And, as such, He appeals to another side of man's nature than his reason : He is, as the Psalmist says, “the joy of the heart.” And, indeed, what we mean by joy in common language has much more to do with our affections than with any operation of our reason. It is in the play of the affections upon an object which responds to them and satisfies them, that most men feel joy. Thus among things here below, many a man's family, his wife, his children, call out and sustain this bounding sense of delight, which the ordinary occupations of his understanding never, or rarely, stimulate. In the wife who welcomes him with a bright smile of tender attachment, as he returns from his work,—in the child who laughs half unconsciously from its cradle at hearing its father's voice, the father feels a profound emotion which ministers to his inmost being, at the moment, the truest and deepest satisfaction. “This,” he says to himself,—“this is real joy : this is nature.” Ah, my brethren, it *is* nature, but it is something more. Little as he may think it, on that threshold, beside that cradle, the man stands face to face with the attributes of the everlasting Being Who has thus infused His tenderness and His love in the works of His hands. What is here, I ask, but a shadow, or a fringe, of that eternal kindness which, in itself, knows no stinted measure, no bounded form,—which depends on no other,—which embraces all other forms of excellence, of blessedness, of perfection,—which ministers out of its exhaustless resources,—to all things tender, their tenderness,—to all things bright, their splendour—to all things perfect, their perfection,—which is out of the true centre of all moral beings—towards which they gravitate—by which they are sustained—in which they rest, as in the end and object of their desire of their appetite, of their movement, of their life.

Brethren, God's attributes of holiness, justice, mercy, may well delight the human mind,—not less than those other attributes which we have been considering,—but they address themselves, and inevitably, to our moral nature. Involuntarily, as we gaze on God, the holy, the true, the tender, the just, we turn our eyes upon ourselves. "If He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," what, we must each ask, "does He see in me?" If He is righteous in Himself, and true in His judgments, what must we sinners expect at His hands? If, indeed, we could bring ourselves to contemplate His Being only as an abstract problem, we might still find in it intellectual satisfaction. But how is this satisfaction permanently possible, when these, His most characteristic moral attributes, have so close and so stern a bearing upon ourselves? Between that uncreated beauty, we know, and our poor enfeebled broken life, some dark shadow has passed; and yet light enough is left us to enable us to see how little we are like Him. No joy in a perfectly holy Being is impossible, while man is still altogether as his first father left him. It was not, we know, ever thus. That were a libel on the character of God. But man, conscious of this radical flaw in his nature—man from age to age, like his parent, at the first—hides himself from the Lord God among the trees of the garden of life. He feels not merely his insignificance: he knows that his nature is somehow warped and degraded. A deep gloom takes possession of him when he thinks steadily of the unseen and the eternal,—when he turns his face upward to the Being Who made him. He would fain bury himself in amusement, in work—anyhow, in self-forgetfulness—anywhere, out of the sight of God.

And not the least gracious part of the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is this, that He has made it again possible for man honestly to rejoice in God, in His justice and in His sanctity, not less than in His mercy,—in His justice and in His sanctity, not less than in those other aspects by which He touches the reason rather than the conscience of His creatures. For our Lord has, in His own person, destroyed this discord between the conscience of man, and the holiness of God. He, representing our whole race, has offered to God a life of perfect obedience, ending in a death which expressed absolute submission of the human to the Divine will, and which, as such, being the death of the Only Begotten, had a value transcending—transcending utterly—all earthly estimates. Since then, all who will may unite themselves by faith to the one perfect, moral Being, Who has appeared on earth, the incarnate Christ; and as such faith, when it is real, eagerly seeks and accepts all which its object has to bestow, from the channels through which He bestows it, His grace establishes an intimate union between the believing soul and its object—a union which is so intimate that, in the sight of the Holy God, they form henceforth but one moral person. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." "We are accepted in the beloved." "He made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Read the first eleven verses of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and see what are the consequences within the soul of the new relation towards God which is established by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. First peace. "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And then, as the soul finds what it is to have entered into the state of grace, "this grace wherein we stand," there comes, secondly, joy. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And joy, as it is one of the first experiences, so, in its more magnificent forms, it is the crowning gift of the new life in the soul of man.

"Not only," says an Apostle, summing up the description, "not only, being reconciled, shall we be saved by Christ's life, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement." The old fear which skulks up behind the trees of the garden from the justice of the All-seeing and the All-powerful is gone. Clinging to the cross of Jesus, we look into the face of the everlasting Father. With joy we draw water out of the wells of salvation—out of the wounds of the Crucified—out of the sacraments of the Church; and we cry "Thou shalt make me in the coming world full of joy with Thy countenance."

May we not, again, hear the Apostle paraphrasing his words. "Rejoice, rejoice, O heart of man, not in any of those passing forms of beauty which would fain arrest and exhaust thy enthusiasm in this earthly scene. Thou art capable of a nobler and higher joy than this. Rejoice in the uncreated, the eternal beauty: rejoice in God,—not only as He presents Himself to thy gaze in the everlasting attributes, but as bending condescendingly to thy weakness and thy need. He takes on Him a form of flesh and blood, and would win thee by sharing the nature that is thine. Rejoice in Jesus: rejoice in His pre-existent glories: rejoice in His birth, in His temptation, in His example, in His miracles, in His teaching, in His passion, in His cross, in His death, in His resurrection, in His perpetual intercession, in His covenanted presence with His people even to the end of time. All this is but one long and varied effort, on thy behalf, of the eternal mercy which has a first claim on thee, O heart of man,—which never has left thee to thyself,—which seeks the homage of thy joy, not for its own sake, but for thine. Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again, I say, rejoice."

Let us note one or two practical points in conclusion. Our power, my brethren, of rejoicing in the Lord is a fair test of our moral and spiritual condition. St. Peter describes Christians as men who, though they see not the Lord Jesus Christ, yet, believing in Him, "rejoice with joy unspeakable." How, indeed, if He is a real Being to us, can it possibly be otherwise? How can we reflect on those eternal years, on that lowly incarnation, on that spotless character, on that cross of shame, on that open grave, on that intercession which ceases not even now, and reflect that all these are ours, and yet not rejoice in Him Whom thus, in the mysteries of His life, we possess? The heart which in Isaiah's language, does not break forth into joy at the mention of His name, at the sound of His words, at the sense of His near presence, is surely, for spiritual purposes, paralysed or dead. If earthly friends, pleasures, literature, employments, objects of art or natural objects, rouse in us keen sensations of delight, and this name which is above every name, this language which is unlike any human speech, this love which transcends all earthly affection, finds and leaves us cold, languid, unconcerned, oh, be sure, that it cannot be well with us. There is something wrong in our moral being,—ay, in the deepest depths of it; for the soul that is at all in a state of grace must rally at a bound to the voice and touch of its redeeming Lord.

And secondly, this power of rejoicing in the Lord is a Christian's main support under the trials of life. Sooner or later these trials must come to all of us; and whether they shall sweep the soul along with them, down the torrent of despair, depends on whether the soul has, or has not, learned to rejoice in an unchanging object Who does not depend on them. David's exclamation, "Thou hast set my feet upon a rock," means that he was thus resting upon One Who does not change with the things of time. And St. Paul, after saying of himself, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God," adds, "not only so, for we glory in tribulations." And so he

describes himself to the Corinthians "as exceedingly joyful in all our tribulations ;" and he prays that the Colossians may be "strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering, with joyfulness." And the Hebrew Christians are congratulated for that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. And St. James bids Christians count it all joy when they fall into divers trials. And the explanation of all such language is that what is outward transient, perishable, is bearable—nay, it is welcome—when the soul has secured that which is inward and imperishable—delight in the thought and presence of God. Heaviness, then, may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. "He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." Nay, he has already—to use our Lord's words—he has already the joy of Christ fulfilled in himself. He may say with the old prophet, but in a deeper sense, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat,—the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet will I rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation."

And thus, lastly, this power of rejoicing in our Lord is one of the great motive forces of the Christian life. Within the regenerate soul it is, in our Lord's words, "a well of water springing up to the everlasting life." It fertilises everything—thought, feeling, resolution, worship. It gives a new spring and impulse to what before was passing and well-nigh dead. It makes outward efforts and inward graces possible which else had been undreamt of. Thus, St. Paul speaking of the Macedonian Christians, says that the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. Thus he prays God to fill the Roman Christians with all joy and peace in believing. Why? That they may abound in hope. In fact, joy is enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is a great motive and productive force which carries men right out of themselves, and makes them able to do and suffer much which else would be impossible.

And thus, in the end, this joy in the Lord does, or should, diffuse itself over a Christian's whole life. A man's look, his manner, his work, his worship, should, if possible, all be cheerful. A Christian in a state of grace has a right, as no other man living has a right, to be in high spirits. Nowhere does the New Testament imply that there is a special sort of spirituality in moroseness and gloom,—least of all in those actions which, more than any other, express our relations to, and our feelings about, the source of our joy—the eternal God. The brighter worship—public worship—can be in the souls of the worshippers, and in all its outward accompaniments, the more distinctly Christian it is. What else do we mean by saying, as we do deliberately over and over again, "My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips. Make a joyful noise to the God of Jacob. O come, let us sing unto the Lord : let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King : let the saints be joyful with glory ; let them rejoice in their beds. I will go to the altar of God, even to the God of my joy and gladness ; and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God." The psalms are full of this language. What does it mean, but that the worship, outward and inward—the worship and the life of those who dare to use it—should be uniformly joyous?

Pray, then, brethren—pray for this great grace, before the Christmas festival is upon us. Pray that through God's pardoning mercy in Christ you may have a right to your Christmas joy. Joy is the gift of the Holy Spirit : ask Him for it. "The works of the Spirit," says the Apostle, "are first love, then joy."—"Righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost," this is the inspired description of the kingdom of God within the soul of man. This gift will not be refused you, if you ask for it. And you will experience not an occasional convulsion, spasmodic, unseemly, boisterous—it may be irreverent, but a tranquil yet strong emotion which, like a river, bearing the soul upon its surface, sparkles brightly as the beams of the Sun of Righteousness fall upon it, and, as slowly, but surely, it pursues its way towards the ocean of eternity ; for there, there, there is the end. There, at the last, "in His presence is the fulness of joy, and at His right hand are the pleasures for evermore."

STEPHEN: THE DEACON AND MARTYR.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 26TH, 1875.

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep."—Acts vii. 60.

THIS was the close of the last scene in a brief but great career. Stephen, the first of Christian deacons—the first of Christian martyrs—had said his last word—had heaved his last sigh—and, as far as this world was concerned, all was over. He fell asleep. Death, which can never, for any human being, be meaningless, was in his case marked by the highest significance, for as he breathed his last, outside the walls of Jerusalem, he, first among the worshippers of Christ, completed that new ideal of life which our Lord had given to the world. "He fell asleep." It was, I say, a solemn and triumphant moment, not for himself only, but for his associates and his country—for the future of the Church of God.

Let us recall what the author of the Acts of the Apostles tells us about him. Stephen was originally a Hellenistic Jew. The Hellenistic Jews, as they were called, were made up partly of proselytes to the Mosaic law—men, that is to say, of purely Greek parentage—and partly of Jews who, by long settlement in a foreign land, had adopted the speech and the manners of Greek civilisation. To say that a man was a Hellenist proved nothing whatever as to his descent: it only showed that he lived the life of a Jew in point of religion, and yet used Greek speech and followed Greek customs. Stephen's name, although Greek, does not preclude the possibility of his having been a Jew by birth; and he is said to have had a Syriac name of the same meaning. Of his conversion to the faith of Christ

we know nothing. He is first mentioned when he is chosen as one of the seven deacons. The Church of Jerusalem, you will remember, in the earliest apostolic age had a common fund into which, at their conversion, all its members threw their personal property and out of which all were supported according to their several needs. The administration of this fund must have come to a very serious and complicated business, even within a few months from its first establishment; and as the higher ministries of the Church were founded, not with a view to carrying on an engrossing work of this kind, but for the conversion and sanctification of souls, it was natural that, with the many calls upon their time which the Apostles had to meet, the finance and resources of the Church should occasionally fall into confusion. And so it was that before many months had passed there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews—that is to say of the Hellenistic against the Jewish converts to Christianity—because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Probably these widows or their friends may have been somewhat exacting; but the Apostles felt that their time ought not to be spent on details of this kind. The twelve—they were all of them still in Jerusalem—the twelve assembled the whole body of the faithful and desired them to elect seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, to be intrusted as deacons with the superintendence of the funds and charities of the Church; seven persons were accordingly chosen, and, at their head, Stephen, described as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. These seven were ordained by the laying on of the Apostles' hands just as deacons are ordained in the Christian Church at this hour; and the consequence of this new appointment was that the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the Jewish priests were obedient to the faith.

Of St. Stephen's exertions in the organisation and direction of the public charity we hear nothing, although we must suppose that this part of his duty was not neglected. We are told that Stephen, full of faith, and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. No details are given, but the fact must not be lost sight of in our estimate of the causes of his success. His first scene of labour seems to have been in "the synagogue," or rather group of synagogues, "of the Libertines and Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia." The Libertines, that is the Jews who had been taken prisoners of the Roman general Pompey, reduced to slavery, then enfranchised, and quite recently banished from Rome in large numbers, would naturally have had a synagogue to themselves in Jerusalem. Another synagogue, or more, would have belonged to the Jews from Northern Africa, Cyrene, and Alexandria, and two or three others, at the least, to the Jews from Cilicia and Asia Minor. A very numerous class these, among whom the future Apostle of the Gentiles was at this very time still numbered as an enthusiastic Pharisee. It was among these Jews from abroad that Stephen opened what, in modern language, we should call a mission. He had more points of contact with these men of Greek speech and habits and thought than had the twelve. He engaged in a series of public disputations, and although he was almost unbefriended, and represented a very unpopular cause, his opponents, we are told, were not able to resist the spirit and the wisdom with which he spoke. As has often been the case since, what could not be done by argument they thought they might do by denunciation and clamour; and, by getting some false witnesses to swear that in their hearing Stephen had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God, they combined against him the jealousy of the upper classes and the prejudices of the lower, and they brought him to trial for blasphemy before the great Jewish court, the Sanhedrim.

Brethren, every one of us, probably, if we only knew it, has some one work which God means us especially to do before we die. What that one work is we do not know at the time. We cannot, each of us, for himself, see our lives spread out like a map, so as to discern the relative importance of their several incidents. But if we could see things as God sees them we should probably see that in the Divine predestination all leads up to, or radiates from, some great work or some great suffering. And if we do not know what this is, it is that we may throw our whole heart and energy in all that we do, lest perchance, we should miss the critical moment of existence. But looking back across the centuries we can perceive

clearly in St. Stephen's case what we may be unable to see in our own. The great work of Stephen's life was the speech he made in his defence before the council. That speech took him, perhaps, half-an-hour or rather more to make, but its effects are very far indeed from having spent themselves now at a distance of eighteen centuries. In that speech Stephen tacitly admits that he had impugned the popular Jewish belief about the temple, and accordingly, in his review of Jewish history, he shows at length, that the presence of God had not in past ages been at all confined to the Holy Land or to the Jewish temple. He shows that Mesopotamia, Egypt, Midian, Sinai, had been favoured by heavenly visions. He shows that ages passed before the temple was built, and that, after it was built, prophets, like Isaiah, had taught the lesson of a world-wide worship just as our Lord taught it to the woman of Samaria. In that speech, too, Stephen shows how the same bitter spirit which was persecuting him to death had been the curse of his countrymen at all the stages of their history,—how they had rebelled against their greatest benefactors—against Joseph, against Moses, how even in the wilderness, they had long neglected the true worship of their God. His audience probably listened at first in contemptuous silence to what they regarded as the ravings of a fanatic, or as a mere dry, historical dissertation, of which they had not caught the drift. But they began now dimly to see what he really meant. He was speaking, they felt, not only of the past but of the present—of all that happened in Jerusalem and on Mount Calvary in the spring of that very year. Like their forefathers, Stephen said, his hearers, too, resisted the Holy Ghost. The Jews of earlier generations had persecuted the prophets who foretold the Just One : the Jews of this generation had murdered that Just One Whom the prophets foretold. At this point their impatience knew no bounds. "They were cut to the heart," says the sacred narrative : "they gnashed upon him with their teeth." As their countenances flashed anger—as the storm of wild irrepressible passion rose in its surging fury around him—Stephen knew that his work was done. But before he left the court he spoke—he would speak—one last word. He looked upwards and lo ! at that supreme moment the higher world was opened to his gaze in its transcendent bliss and glory. The glory of God, nay, Jesus himself, was visible, and that, not seated in his wonted majesty on the throne of heaven, but standing as if ready to assist His suffering servant ; and Stephen in his ecstasy describes what he saw there before his judges,—“Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” “*The Son of man.*” It was the familiar designation of our Lord which He has used of Himself so constantly—“which, in this place alone in the New Testament, is used of Him by any other. “*The Son of man*”—it brought back with unwelcome vividness the language, the presence, of the Crucified to the minds of His judges, and here was a disciple who claimed to see the Crucified in the realms of glory. It was more than they could bear. Stephen knew that his work was done and that a sterner scene must follow. And they would listen no longer ; they stopped their ears ; they ran upon him with one accord : they cast him out of the city. They were too angry to reflect that the vengeance which they meditated required the sanction of the Roman Government. They could not wait for a doubtful verdict. Stephen must die at once as the law ordered that a blasphemer should die. The wild rush of the mob—the judges, the populace, the witnesses with their victim—through the streets of Jerusalem was soon accomplished. They were without the walls on the side opposite the Mount of Olives. There was a pause during which the witnesses who had denounced him and who were bound by the Mosaic law to take the lead in his execution, stripped themselves that they might the better perform their dreadful task. The young man named Saul guarded their clothes, and then they led the way, and the multitude followed. As the stones fell thick and heavily on the dying martyr he entreated our Lord Whom he had just seen in the heavens, to receive his spirit. Another volley followed ; and another prayer—the last—was uttered in the spirit of the first of the seven words upon the cross : “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” And now all was over. To the eye of sense it seemed a hideous butchery in which a pure and noble life was crushed out of a young man by horrible torture ; but, as Stephen sank in death upon the ground, the Bible simply says, “When he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Let us endeavour, brethren, to gather up one or two of the lessons of Stephen's life and death.

He is, first of all, remarkable as a Christian teacher of original power. He consecrates beneath the eyes of the Apostles the gift of religious originality. Religious originality is a phrase that may be easily misunderstood and abused. There is, for instance, absolutely no room for such original treatment of religion as would be the case if the faith were a work of imagination, so that its subject matter could be changed or modified at the pleasure of an individual artist. A revelation, if it is to be worthy of its name, comes from God. God warrants the trustworthiness of its contents, of its substance, and into this sphere man cannot obtrude anything of his own without being guilty of something much worse than impertinence. Any addition to what God has said is so much foreign matter which is no part of the revelation at all. In the plain and simple language of the earliest Christians, the man who should invent new doctrines, or who should deny old ones, would have been called a heretic. He would have been condemned as purely mischievous and would have commanded no admiration whatever on the score of originality. If, of course, properly speaking, there were no such thing as a revelation from God at all—if all Christian faith, in the last analysis, should prove to be the product of the fancy, or of the speculations of highly gifted men—then we of to-day might very well improve upon the New Testament or the creeds, and there would be plenty of scope for this creative originality. But, as it is, for us Christians the old precepts still hold good—"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." "Add not thou unto the words of God lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. But although nothing can be added to or changed in a faith which comes to us on Divine authority, there is scope for originality in the way or apprehending and presenting it, and in the relative prominence which is given to different portions of it. In these ways, while it is itself unchanging, the Divine message takes a colour—a flavour—from the different minds that transmit it. The great teachers of the Christian Church have constantly been in this sense original. Augustine and Chrysostom taught the same truth, but they presented it in very different lights to the western and eastern worlds respectively. Nay, the inspired Apostles themselves—St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and St. Paul preaching, as they did, the same Gospel, laid emphasis upon very different elements of the common truth which they preached, and in this sense, under a heavenly and unerring guidance, each of them was highly original : each delivered the common doctrine after a form and fashion peculiar to himself. And as this holds good of the teachers of later times, so it is peculiarly true of St. Stephen. Stephen did not preach any other Gospel than that which St. Peter and St. John had been preaching ever since the day of Pentecost ; but his originality consisted in the prominence which he gave to one element in the common faith upon which as yet, judging from the reports in the Acts of the Apostles, the chiefs of the Church appear to have insisted. Stephen, as we have seen, maintained that the Divine favour and presence was no longer to be identified with the Jewish temple and the Jewish ritual, and this was what his enemies meant by saying that he had spoken against this holy place and the law. Up to this date the Christians in Jerusalem had largely, although not exclusively, resorted to the temple for their public worship. Those old rites, that world-famed sanctuary, had a fascination for them which we cannot now comprehend. Stephen saw that in the words of Christ there lay the promise not of a petty Jewish sect, but of a worldwide or catholic Church, and that, if this promise was to be realised, the local, transient, imperfect character of the temple worship must be steadily insisted on. Our Lord has said, "I am the light of the world." He has said, "Go ye into *all the world* and preach the gospel to every creature." The Apostles, too, knew and believed His words ; but Stephen drew out the import of these words from the midst of the surrounding teaching. He gave it commanding prominence. He secured for it high and practical importance by applying it to the existing circumstances of the Church in

Jerusalem, and thus he produced a profound impression, hostile as well as friendly and sympathetic. It was this very element in his teaching which led to his death. It was this element of his teaching which made him, little as he knew it at the time, the forerunner and, as he was called by the old writers, the master of St. Paul. Saul of Tarsus did not only keep the clothes of the witnesses at the martyrdom : he must, almost certainly, have heard the speech before the Sanhedrim, if, indeed, he had not taken part at an earlier date in the public disputations in the Cilician synagogue. And here we see the germ of the characteristic doctrines of Paul's great epistles—of the insufficiency of the Mosaic law—of the freedom of Divine grace—of the worldwide universality and catholic character of the Christian Church—of the passing away of the old things of the Jewish covenant, because in Christ all things had become new.

Let us learn, brethren, to distinguish—the distinction is of importance—between originality and invention. In the things of God invention is profane ; but in the case of an earnest mind, some kind or degree of originality is inevitable. Each mind, to which the Divine truth is a serious reality, apprehends a truth in its own peculiar way according to the drift and guidance of its own peculiar needs. A sincere hold on truth is scarcely consistent with an entire absence of peculiarities in the mode of conceiving and presenting it. When truth is real to a man he feels towards it—he describes it—as it strikes him and nobody else ; and this, his way of regarding it, as distinct from what it is in itself, or as at the first it was given by God, is the proper province of religious originality.

And St. Stephen, secondly, was a man of great force of character—of great practical capacity. As such he was chosen to be one of the seven deacons who had to supervise and distribute the charities of the Church. There is no sufficient reason for thinking that these deacons of the Acts of the Apostles were not the same order as those mentioned in St. Paul's later Epistles to Titus and Timothy. The only difference is that in the Acts, for practical reasons, the lower side of the office is laid most stress upon. St. Stephen, then, was not going beyond his province when, with a view to propagate the faith, he held public distributions in Jerusalem ; but, undoubtedly, many a man in Stephen's position would have contented himself, probably, with such a rearrangement of the public charities of the Church as should have silenced the complaints of the widows. Stephen viewed his new position not as an office the duties of which must be got through somehow, but as an opportunity for new and enlarged efforts on behalf of the faith. And that this energy or force of character was not simply natural is plain by the language which holy scripture uses to describe it. Already before his ordination Stephen is said to be full of faith and the Holy Ghost. In action afterwards he is full of faith and power. The wisdom and the spirit by which he spake in the disputes in the synagogue was so great that his opponents could not resist him, and when the last scene was upon him, and the angry Sanhedrim was already threatening him with a dreadful death, Stephen, we are told, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven." His strength was given him by the Divine and Eternal Spirit Who, in accordance with our Lord's promise on the eve of His own sufferings, had actually come down to give force as well as wisdom to His Church on the day of Pentecost. And this holds good of all religious energy which God accepts. It is not at bottom—believe it, brethren—it is not at bottom a matter of natural character. It is constantly exhibited by persons who are naturally indolent or timid. Now, as of old, it comes from a higher source than nature. It comes from that Holy, ever-living Spirit who divideth to every man severally as He wills. And this force is, in its essence, nothing less than charity—"the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us"—the love of God, in the first place, and then, for God's sake, the love of man. Stephen was richly endowed with this spiritual force. The love of God made him speak before the Sanhedrim as he did speak, at the cost of his life. The love of man made his last prayer a prayer for the pardon of his murderers. Contrast Stephen's prayer with that of the dying priest, Zechariah, who, as described in the First Lesson of this afternoon's service, was stoned at the command of King Joash in the court of the temple. When he died he said, "The Lord look upon it and require it." Since then, however, fallen human nature has been

endowed with a new power in the person of the incarnate Son ; and Stephen's life was so rich in results, and his death was so bright with moral glory, because he shared so largely in the Divine gift which came through the Spirit of the ascended Saviour.

If, thirdly, Stephen was thus a martyr, he was the first martyr. "That holy martyr, Stephen," is the expression of St. Paul at a later time. The idea of martyrdom as the highest form of moral courage—as the crowning achievement of a noble life, is a creation of Christianity. It grew directly out of the idea of the inviolate sanctity of truth, and this again was based on the conviction that God had really spoken to men by His Son, and that, in consequence, men really possessed a truth which is worth costly sacrifices. Before this, if we except the Jewish people, there was no idea abroad in the world of the obligations, or even of the existence, of truth as Christians understand it. The human mind was worn out by the importunities of innumerable guesses at truth, many of them quite contradictory of each other, and in its despair had exclaimed again and again with Pilate "What is truth?" It seemed that nothing was so certain as to be worth living for, much less that anything was so certain as to be worth dying for. It was the glory of St. Stephen, first of all, to illustrate by his personal example the vigour of that new sense that it was nothing less than the truth which was making its way among redeemed men. Eight months before, he knew—perhaps he had witnessed—the price paid for truth on Mount Calvary. "To this end was I born," said the Divine sufferer, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." And He Who had said this said also, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in Samaria and in the uttermost parts of the earth." And this witness was to be borne partly by teaching, partly by action, partly—in those days chiefly—by suffering. If action is more eloquent than language, suffering is more eloquent than action. Many a man can talk well who cannot act consistently. Many a man can act with tolerable consistency who yet shrinks from silent, unrepining endurance for the sake of what he knows to be truth and goodness. Stephen did all three : he taught well and much ; he acted vigorously and consistently with what he taught ; and when the time came he suffered. If the speech before the Sanhedrim was the great work of his life, his death did more than his greatest work. Then, as in later times, again and again, the blood of the Christian martyr, rather than the eloquence of the Christian teacher, was the seed of the Church.

And observe here, brethren, that where Stephen is greatest he is most easy of imitation. None of us, it seems, now can work his miracles or present truth with the clearness and authority which belonged to him ; but, in our measure, we can all of us suffer—suffer something, however comparatively trivial, for the Divine cause among men. And this capacity for suffering is the true force of the Church : it is the reserve force on which she falls back in times of trial and discouragement. The eloquence of endurance is the most persuasive, as it is the most lasting, of her gifts, and every man, woman, or child, who is a servant of Christ, may, by God's grace, have a share in it.

Three short reflections in conclusion.

Many persons think and say that they could do much for the cause of truth and goodness if only they could command a long term of years. They are, as it is, young, or they have not much time at their disposal ; and the consequence is that they do little or nothing. Reflect, brethren, that Stephen was probably a young man,—that he was a Christian certainly only for a few months. About eight months, it seems, had passed since the crucifixion, when Stephen's great work was already done—when he closed a ministry, rich in its best results, by a martyr's death. In all that touches the human soul time counts for much less than men think. Fifty years may easily be passed without any real growth or work, while a few weeks, or days, or even a few hours, may decide the most momentous issues—may decide an eternity. Concentration of aim—intensity of thought and will—these make time to be of little or no account ; a young man who throws himself with single-heartedness of purpose into a cause or work which he knows to be deserving of his best energies may do almost anything. History is full of the lives of those who have done the work of a long life in a few years, and have died

young. Statesmen like Pitt, musicians like Mozart, philanthropists like Edward Denison, missionaries like Martyn and Patteson—these have taught the world in their several places and degrees that hoar hairs and length of days are not a necessary condition of doing effective work. They have taught the lesson of St. Stephen who was still a young man, and seemed to have before him a life pregnant with possibilities of greatness when he lay down to die outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Again. Many men think that if only they were in some higher and more influential position than they are, they could do some real work for God. If that lieutenant were only a general, or at the Horse Guards, how far better would it be for the army. If this public writer were only in the Cabinet, how much bolder and wiser would be the policy of the country. If such and such a clergyman were only a bishop, how different would be the circumstances of the Church. St. Stephen, observe, was not in a position of influence—at least, of commanding influence. He was only a deacon, and his main business for the time was to attend to the equitable distribution of alms. Above him were the sacred twelve, chosen by our Lord Himself—eleven of them during His earthly life—one from heaven since the ascension. In the eyes of all true believers they held a foremost place. They corresponded to the twelve patriarchs of Israel. Upon them, as on the twelve prophets as a foundation, was built, says the Apostle, the Church of God. But the deacons were of no special consideration. The Church had existed some months without them; and their humble but useful labours were not indispensable to her existence or progress. And yet Stephen does a work which is greater than that of any save the three leading Apostles and St. Paul, so far as we can gather from the report in the New Testament. For a while in the narrative of the Acts—(you must all of you have observed it as you read)—we lose sight of St. Peter altogether, and St. Paul has not yet come upon the scene. The one dominant figure, full of interest—of moral, spiritual, tragic interest—is the deacon Stephen. His labours, his teaching, his last agonies, his moral and spiritual triumph over death, eclipse, for the time being, all besides.

No, brethren, this habit of thinking that you would do a great deal of good, if you were something else than what you are, is fatal to your doing what you might do where you are. As a rule, men who do little in a lower position would do less in a higher. The man who, wasting the one talent, made the one talent the excuse, would have wasted the five. A life which is spent in dreaming of what might be under other circumstances is lost to acting for the best under the present circumstances. If Stephen had said, "If I were only in the place of Peter, I would dispute with the Hellenists; I would address the Sanhedrim; I would die, if need be as a martyr for Christ," he never would have done any one of these things. He did what he could, where, and being what, he was. His real greatness was altogether independent of his position.

And, lastly, men have asked why Christmas Day, of all the days in the year, should be followed by the festival of the first Christian martyr,—the birthday of the world's true King by the anniversary of a tragedy. The answer is, surely, not far to seek, at least for any practical Christian. Yesterday proclaimed a great Christian truth : to-day points the moral. Brethren, the incarnation of the Son of God is not a speculation of the understanding : it is a fact in history which has lessons for the heart. It is incomparably the greatest fact in the history of our race; and, as such, it carries with it—it imposes in the sphere of duty—corresponding moral consequences. If the Everlasting and the Almighty laid aside His glory to enter into conditions of time, and to robe Himself in our frail human nature, that He might by His atoning death and by His gift of a new nature through communion with Himself, recover us to God, surely, it is no exaggeration to say, in familiar words, that,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small :
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

And Stephen, shedding his blood thus cheerfully and joyfully for the Master Who had redeemed him, shows what faith in an incarnate and crucified God should ever mean for Christians. "If He has done so much for me, what can I possibly do for Him?"—that should be the keynote of a Christian life. He may ask little or much : He may demand heroic sacrifices, or He may ask only for punctual attention to daily and prosaic duty : but this is certain—that He has a right to make any demands He wills ; and it should be a point of honour with every Christian to satisfy Him. It is this simple self-surrender in a spirit of love to God, and for the souls of men, which makes life strong and noble, as was the life of St. Stephen. It is this self-surrender which makes death, whenever or wherever it may come, a falling asleep in Christ.

Pray we, brethren, the Divine Child, born as at this time for us, that we, being regenerate and made His brethren, and our Father's children, by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by His Holy Spirit, so that for us, as for St. Stephen, and for Stephen's greater pupil, to live may be Christ, and to die our gain.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE DEVIL.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 2ND, 1876.

"That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."—
HEB. ii. 14.

IN his Rationale of the Book of Common Prayer, Bishop Sparrow tells us that the fifth Sunday in Lent is called Passion Sunday, "for now," he says, "begins the commemoration of the passion of our Lord." And, in truth, on this day we pass a frontier line in the sacred season of Lent. We enter on the last and most solemn portion of it. In the Christian year, Easter answers to the Passover among the Jews, much as the reality answers to the shadow. And as the Jews numbered fourteen days in the month before their Passover feast came, so do we Christians in our reckoning of the days before Easter. To quote Bishop Sparrow again, the epistle and gospel for to-day both speak of the passion of our Lord. The epistle tells us how He gave His life both as priest and victim for the sins of men; and the gospel describes the insult and violence to which He was exposed in the temple when He told the Jews that before Abraham was born He was Himself already existing—existing eternally. That scene was the first drop which announced the approaching storm. And so from to-day, onwards, throughout the next fortnight, and more particularly during the latter part of it, true Christians will try, as much as they can, to put other thoughts aside, save those thoughts of their own sinfulness and misery which have occupied them from the beginning of Lent; and to devote themselves, heart and soul, in such leisure time as they can command, to considering what wonderful proof of the love and of the holiness of God—the sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son.

And in the text we are reminded of one effect of this great event which at all times, and especially at the present time, for reasons to which I need not more particularly refer, it is well to bear in mind. Through death, the Apostle says, Christ intended to destroy—that is, not to annihilate, but to render powerless, ineffective—"him that had the power of death, that is the devil." This was one reason why the Son of God took on Him our nature. He took part in our flesh and blood,—so says the Apostle,—that He might put

Himself into circumstances where death was possible in order that by dying He might free us from our ancient enemy. He has won His victory; and now that He has died it is our fault, not His, if we are not free. This is the plain meaning of the passage, and the subject is practical enough to deserve close attention.

And here, first of all, our thoughts turn towards the being who, the Apostle tells us, was to be reduced to impotence by the death of Jesus Christ. Who and what is he? What do we really know about him—about his history, his character, his power of affecting ourselves and our destiny?

There are two considerations among others which make a great many persons unwilling to approach this subject. First of all, they say, "It is an unpleasant subject. If the world and human life are haunted by such a being as the Evil One, we would rather, if we can, think of them without him. We like the bright side of religion as we like the bright side of life. Tell us of heaven; tell us of liberty; tell us of Jesus Christ; tell us of good men. If there is a dark side to the picture, we would rather not see it. If there is a devil we would rather forget him, or think of him as seldom as we can. Thus speaks the religion of feeling or of taste as distinct from the religion of simple truth. True religion must base itself on truth—must desire to see truth all round—must welcome disagreeable truth not less than truth which brings strength and consolation—must desire like the old Greek poet, if need be, to perish in the light, but to know all that can be known and at all costs. Nothing is gained, and much is lost, by shrinking from fact because fact is disagreeable. There are some animals which are said to close their eyes at the approach of the creature that preys upon them; but this precaution does nothing to avert their fate. Religion, beyond everything else, should have the courage to look truth in the face, from a conviction that, whatever may be the anxiety or anguish of the moment, she can more than afford to do so, and that not to do so is to cease to be herself.

And, secondly, some men suggest that the devil is an unprofitable subject for discussion. They do not think that much, practically, depends on our believing in him or not. "If," they say, "a man does what he knows to be good, so far as he can,—if he resists what he knows to be evil, so far as he can, it does not much concern him whether evil is or is not represented by a powerful invisible being who makes it his business to administer and to promote it." The whole question, we are told, in the phrase of the day—the whole question belongs to speculation rather than to practice, and speculation, however interesting to those who have time and taste for it, cannot touch the eternal destinies of a being like man. And this kind of language appeals very forcibly to our national character. We English are, before all things, practical. But is the question in hand so purely speculative—so remote from practical interests—as is here implied? Does it really make no difference whether a man believes only in a vague something which he calls an evil principle, or whether he believes in an intelligent and working—that is to say, in a personal—devil? Surely, in ordinary matters, it makes all the difference in the world to a man whether he supposes himself to be dealing with an abstract idea, tendency, principle—call it what you will—or with a living will. We should cease to be human if it were not so—if we were not far more profoundly affected by feeling ourselves close to a living being, than by feeling ourselves under the vague and more intangible influence termed provisionally "a principle," especially of an evil—that is to say, a negative—principle. This, indeed, is true, whether the principle be good or evil, and the reason is because we know that an abstract principle only affects us so far as we assent to it. It has no independent vital force in itself to propagate and enforce itself—to extend its sway—unless it be in the language of poetry and metaphor. Apart from human intelligences and human wills, it is an inert thing, not having any such independent existence as a cloud, or a gas. It affects us just so far as it is apprehended: it has no real range or play beyond the intelligences which it sways. But let it be represented—let it be embodied—in a living intelligence—in a living will, and the case is very different. Then it may

act upon us whether we are thinking of it or not. Then it is dependent, not on our discretion, but on its own. An abstract evil principle, indeed! Why, any abstract principle, good or evil, without a living representative or embodiment, is like a philanthropic or political enterprise which has not yet found a good working secretary,—which as yet exists only upon paper. It may have much to say for itself in the way of argument: it does not make much way to men's hearts or purses until somebody takes it up and, as we say, "pushes" it. A doctrine in political economy, sound or mistaken, is of little account to the world while it only exists in a treatise on the shelves of a library; but let a powerful finance minister adopt it and set himself to give it practical expression, and it may save or ruin a great country. A vision of national unity or of national aggrandisement may for centuries haunt the imagination and inspire the poetry of a race; but until the man has appeared who gathers up into himself all this vague and floating sentiment, and gives it the dignity and the force of ardent conviction and of determined will—until the abstraction has become identified with the brain, with the purpose, with the passion, of a Napoleon or a Bismarck—there is before us only a patriotic or literary dream, which makes the fortunes of a few publicists or poets—which leaves no trace upon the history of the world. Do you suppose that goodness itself would still exert that strong attraction which it has for good men if they believed in no being whose nature goodness is,—who, as being what he is, embodies and represents it?

Doubtless it is true enough that we fallen men have already a bias or warp in the direction of evil, and that, in order to assert its empire over us, evil does not require such energetic measures as do goodness and truth. But the question here is whether a man's own sense of the power of evil—of the manner in which it is brought to bear on him—of the precautions which he must take against it—of the resistance which he must oppose to it—is unaffected by his belief in its propagation by a powerful, clever, active being, who devotes himself unremittingly to the work or not. My brethren, if anything in the way of opinion is impractical it is the refusal to recognise the immense practical importance of the presence or absence of belief in the personal reality of the Evil One, to the gravest interests of man. When men discard the old teaching of the Bible and of the Christian Church about the Evil One, and talk vaguely of an evil principle, it is well to ask what do they exactly mean by that imposing phrase. How can evil itself be, strictly speaking, a principle? The very essence of evil is absence of principle—principle being something positive. Evil is contradiction to positive principle. Every sin, for instance, is, in its essence, a contradiction of one of those positive moral laws which are part of the necessary nature of God, by which He wills to rule the universe. Evil is a perverted selfish quality of the will of an already existing personal creature. Evil could not exist apart from such a creature unless the will of such a creature was free. Evil has no body or substance in itself. It is only a twist or warp in a created will which makes a creature refuse, not merely in opposition to God, but in opposition to its own best interests, to own God as its Lord, and to make itself conform to Him. But if this be the case—and it is, I apprehend, the substance of all that two of the greatest of Christian thinkers, such as Augustin and Leibnitz, have said on the subject—then the phrase "an evil principle" melts away before our eyes as a mere mist of the imagination. On the other hand, it is plain enough that in some way or other evil does operate most disastrously. Its desolating ravages are a mere matter of experience, and the alternative supposition is that this weird negation of good has found, at some time and somewhere, an invisible and energetic secretary—that it is propagated in every possible manner by a person of high intelligence and resolute will.

But I am asked in turn, "What do you mean by a person?" and this question has been, at least in part, already answered; but it is important to be as clear as may be. Since it first entered into the speech of the western world, the word "person" has had an eventful history. It meant at first the mask or disguise by which the face or figure of an historical character was

represented on the stage ; and in this sense men spoke commonly of a great or an insignificant person. But it was soon felt that that which marks off one man from another is not the countenance so much as the character—not the bodily form so much as the invisible soul or spirit. Accordingly the word "person" was gradually transferred from the mask to the supposed bearer, from that which meets the eye to that which is beyond the ken of sense, and which belongs to spirit. And thus in modern language personality means the very essential central being of man, his conscious intelligence, his self-determining will ; and in this sense "person" is commonly opposed to "thing." The mineral, the vegetable, nay, the mere animal, are things. Man is a person, but man is not alone in this possession of personality. God, the all-surveying Intelligence—God, the one Will which is absolutely free—God Who does what He ordains, and Who is bound by no law save that of His own perfections—God is the first of persons, utterly distinct from the created things with which He has surrounded Himself, not merely as being created, but as lacking personality. And good angels, whose existence and capacities are revealed to us, are persons possessing, as they do in varying degrees of range and intensity, self-conscious intellect and self-determining will.

If, then, we speak of the personality of Satan, we mean that he, too, is an intelligence capable of reflecting on his own existence,—that he, too, is a will which, at least, has had the power of determining its destiny. He possesses the very properties which are the essence of our manhood, only on a much larger scale than we.

Now, whether an invisible character—Satan—exists or not is one of those questions which cannot be settled by the senses. Only the Author of this universe can tell us about portions of it which are so entirely removed from the reach of our observation ; and Christians believe Him to have done so in holy Scripture. When a modern writer compares Satan to Tisiphone, and says that they are, alike, not real persons but shadows thrown forward by man's guilt or man's terror, he really assumes that the Bible is a mere reflex of human weakness and human passion, instead of a revelation of the mind of God. For all who believe the Bible to be a trustworthy source of information on such subjects, there is no real room for question as to the existence of a personal evil spirit. You must deliberately exclude a great many passages from your Bible if you would get rid of the belief. All that implies personality is attributed to Satan in holy Scripture, as distinctly as it is attributed to God. Read the description of Eve's temptation at the beginning of Genesis, or the account of the origin of the trials of Job, or the explanation of the pestilence which followed David's numbering the people as given in the Chronicles, or the vivid picture of Satan's resistance of Joshua in Zechariah. In these histories you have before you a being who gives every evidence of self-conscious thought and of determined purpose.

And in the New Testament the representation is fuller and more sustained. Not to dwell on what St. Paul tells us of the various ranks of evil spirits with whom Christians wrestle—principalities, powers, rulers of world's darkness, or on his description of their chief as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," or on his warning to the Ephesians against the wiles of Satan, or to the Corinthians against the devices of Satan, or to Timothy three times over against the snare of Satan ; not to dwell on St. Peter's account of him as a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour, or on St. John's vision of his struggle with the good angels, or on St. James's warrant that if even we, in our weakness, resist him he will flee from us ; let us consider what Jesus Christ our Lord and Master has said on this subject. How significant is His warning in the parable of the sower against the evil one which taketh away the Divine seed sown in the heart of man, and, in the parable of the tares, against the enemy who sows the tares along with the wheat, thus representing Satan, first, as destroying good, and, next, as introducing evil within the range of his influence. How full of meaning is the announcement, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,"—the declaration, "I beheld Satan as

lightning fall from heaven,"—the warning to St. Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat,"—the saying about Judas, "One of you is a devil,"—the literal reality which is attributed to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, associated historically with a neighbouring form of idolatry,—the tremendous denunciation to the Jews, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the works of your father will ye do; he was a murderer from the beginning. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it,"—the prayer bequeathed by Christ to Christians for all time, "Deliver us," not "from evil," but, as it should be rendered, "from the evil one."

It has, I know, been said that this language of Jesus Christ must not be pressed closely, because, forsooth, He is only adapting Himself to the belief and intelligence of the men of His day. His own knowledge—it is patronisingly hinted—was in advance of such beliefs, but He accommodated Himself to them in the hope of doing such good as was possible among a rude and superstitious people like the Jews. It is difficult to understand how such a method of dealing with our Lord's teaching can possibly be adopted by any man who respects Him, I will not say as a Divine, but ever as a human teacher; for what is the necessary inference as to Himself? If the current faith about the evil spirit, on which He so solemnly and so repeatedly set the seal of His approval, was really false, He either knew it to be false, or He did not. If He did not, then, in the eyes of those who now reject it, He was Himself the victim of a stupid superstition. If He did know it to be false, and yet sanctioned and reaffirmed it, He was guilty of a much graver fault in a religious teacher than ignorance. Yes, it must be said, He encouraged acquiescence in known falsehood. What would you say, my brethren, of us, as ministers, if you had reason to suspect that, in order to uphold existing institutions, or to conciliate sympathies which would be otherwise irreconcilable, we were not simply to connive at what we know to be untrue, but to reaffirm it,—to enforce it with all the solemnity which belongs to utterance in the name of God? What is the condemnation which the human conscience has pronounced in all countries and in all ages upon this crime against known truth, but the sternest that it can utter? And how is it possible for any but His bitterest enemies to dare to impute the shadow of such an offence to Him Who spake—the world itself being witness—as never man spake? No, our Lord Jesus Christ has identified the truth of this doctrine of a personal evil spirit with His own character as an honest teacher of the highest truth. We can not consistently deny the doctrine and continue really to revere the Teacher Who reaffirmed it so solemnly. We can not exculpate Him as if He were some pagan philosopher who had a secret truth for his chosen friends, while he patronised the current superstitions of the vulgar as being all that they were equal to understanding. This contempt of humanity, blended with a greater contempt of truth, is utterly at variance with the character and with the mission of Him Who said on the eve of His death, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

And do not the facts of human life, when we have learnt to do them justice, bear out what we learn on this subject from the lips of Jesus Christ? On the one hand we see great effects for good produced upon men's characters and upon human society, at this or that period of the world's history. We see sudden and inexplicable changes of life like that of a Paul or of an Augustin. We see immense efforts unaccountably made by large bodies of men for such truth and such virtue as they know of, and we say to ourselves, "This is not only or simply human nature. There is another agent at work who is the real author of this change. We know what human nature is when left to its own resources. Here is the finger—here is the spirit—of the personal God." But when, on the other hand, we see, as we do see, individuals and communities pursuing evil with deliberation, although they know from experience, and without any reference to a future state, that evil, on the whole, means misery; when we study characters and movements, ancient and modern, which have

astonished even a bad world by their enthusiasm for pure unrighteousness; when we mark how much sin lies, so to speak, off the highway of nature and is contradictory to nature, how the abandonment and murder of young children, cruelty to wives, dishonour and insult to parents, are matters of almost daily occurrence in this vast hive of human beings, which we call London; nay, when we who are in this church look, each and all of us, within ourselves—all of us, of all classes, noble and humble, rich and poor, old and young, clergymen and laymen—and find, as we investigate, thoughts, words, actions, that we, too, must repeat, word for word, after the Apostle, the paradoxical confession, "The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do;" is it not, I ask you, reasonable to say "Here, too, is at work a personal agent, of another kind, acting upon the propensities, the weaknesses, the passions of men"? Nature, we know, has a bad hereditary twist; but even depraved nature left quite to itself is ruled in some degree by common sense; and common sense, if it were alone, and if it could have its way—common sense, gathering up the accumulated experience and results of moral evil, would surely counsel man to guard evil as against an epidemic,—to exterminate it as if it were a ferocious wild beast. And this enthusiasm for evil, such as is to be observed in the actions, in the conversations, in the writings, of no inconsiderable portion of mankind, is reasonably to be explained by the Christian doctrine that in dealing with evil we have to deal with no mere airy impalpable abstraction, but with a living person of great experience and accomplishments, whose malignant action within a smaller area tells its own story, as the action of a living person, just as truly as on a larger scale and in an opposite direction does the action of the all-good and merciful God.

There are two points in the Christian representation of the evil one to which attention should specially be given.

Satan, we are told in the Bible, was not always what he is now. He was once a glorious archangel. He became what he is by his own act and deed. Observe the importance of this as sharply marking off the Christian belief from that Zoroastrian doctrine of an eternal evil principle with which it is mistakenly confounded—from which, more mistakenly still, it is sometimes supposed to be derived. The difference is vital. The oriental Aremā is nothing less than an original antidote. The existence of such a being is inconsistent with that of a supreme and all-good God. It is inconsistent, too, with the fact that evil can not, from the nature of the case, be personal in any being in the sense in which good is personal in God. Evil can not be personal in or of itself. It can only obtain the advantages (so to term them) of personal embodiment and personal action by being exhibited by some already existing creature, endowed with will—a creature which freely determines implicitly to accept it by rejecting good. And therefore the Bible always represents Satan, not as a self-existing evil being, but as a fallen and apostate angel. St. Peter speaks of "the angels who sinned" and were cast down to hell,—St. Jude, of "the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation;"—St. Paul of the condemnation of the devil as resembling that of a novice among men lifted up with pride. In Satan evil has become fixed and dominant, as in an existing personal being. There is no such thing in the universe of the almighty and all-good God as a self-existing, originally created devil.

And, secondly, the Satan of Scripture has limited although extensive powers. It is necessary to remember that Milton's Satan, which has so largely coloured English thought, is a beautiful but audacious creation of poetry, invested with more than one false title to interest which the Satan of Scripture and of fact does not possess. It is a mistake to think of this being as omnipresent. He is often enough in the way—not always—not everywhere. It is a greater mistake to deem him omnipotent, or in any sense a rival, after the fashion of the eastern thinkers, to the all-good God. He is like a rebel chieftain who maintains a destructive warfare for a given period, but who might and who will eventually be crushed. "Why boasteth thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou can'st do mischief, whereas the goodness of God endureth yet

daily? Thy tongue imagineth wickedness; and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor. Thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness, and to talk of lies more than righteousness. Thou hast loved to speak all words that may do hurt, O thou false tongue. Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever." The evil principle of the east is practically invincible: he defies the goodness and the empire of God. Satan is tolerated. "The devil," says the Divine Book, "is come down having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

And if the supreme question be asked—"How can you reconcile the continued toleration of such a being as the evil one by God with His attributes of goodness and almightiness?" it must be answered that the full explanation must lie beyond our present range of vision. Only observe that the difficulty, if greater in degree, is the same in kind as that which we feel at the spectacle of a human being, say of the character and in the position of the Roman emperor, Nero, who, like all very bad men, may be regarded as a serious approximation towards a visible Satan. Here is a man invested with absolute power over millions of his fellow-creatures, and who employs this power after a fashion which entails the execration of the world,—who continues to inflict, within the range of his action, an amount of moral and physical mischief which it is appalling to contemplate even across the centuries. His reign comes to an end in time, but the question why he is allowed to be where and what he is during the years of empire is the same question—different in its scale, but the same in principle—as that about the toleration of the devil in the invisible world. Why is either of them—the devil or Nero—tolerated even for a while by such a being as God? It is one department of that supreme mystery—the existence of evil at all in a universe controlled by a being Who is all-powerful and all-good. We can only, in the last resort, say that the Master of the universe sees farther than we do, and will one day, perhaps, enable us to understand in a measure these rules of His government which perplex us now. Meanwhile, experience comes here, as so often, to the aid of faith, and the facts and history of the visible world in which we live present exactly the same problem to our thoughts, respecting the ways of God, as that invisible world the inhabitants of which are only known to us by His revelation.

Above all, let us, as we take leave of the subject, fix in our minds the words and the lesson of the text. Christ came that He might render powerless "him that had the power of death; that is the devil." And He has done this. He has done so when we might least have expected Him to do it—at that which, to the eye of sense, might have seemed the climax of His own weakness humiliation, and shame. Satan, says the Apostle, had the power of death. Like those brigand chiefs who ply their dark trade upon a mountain frontier, or on a lonely road, so the evil one had established a kind of recognised though illegal jurisdiction along the indistinct and mysterious boundary line which parts, in human experience, this world of sense from the world of spirits. In addition to the physical anguish of dissolution there was present to the minds of generations of the dying the sense that in that dark hour something worse than bodily agony was to be apprehended—nothing less than the subtle or malignant onset of an invisible spirit, the soul's enemy and the enemy of God. Sin was the weapon whereby he made death so terrible. "The sting of death is sin." It is from this apprehension that the faithful are freed by the death of Jesus Christ. By dying, the Apostle tells us, our Lord, as man, invaded this region of human experience,—conquered, for Himself and for us, its old oppressor. When He seemed to the eye of sense to be Himself sinking beneath the agony and exhaustion of the cross, He was really, in the Apostle's enraptured vision, like one of those Roman generals whose victories were celebrated by the most splendid ceremonies known to the capital of the ancient world. He was the spoiler of principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross. The day of Calvary ranked in St. Paul's eyes, in virtue of this one out of its many results, far above the great battle-fields which, a generation before, had settled

the destinies of the world—Pharsalia, Philippi, Actium. Satan was conquered by the Son of man because sin, the sting of death, had been extracted and pardoned,—because it was henceforth possible for all who would to clasp the pierced hands of the Crucified, and to pass through that region of shadows as “more than conquerors through Him that loved them.”

And here, brethren, we can only follow the guidance of faith. That there is an evil being who is at work in the world—at work around, upon, it may be within us—is what we should naturally infer from what we see and observe. Evil, like good, organises itself, propagates itself, forces its way as if it could bring happiness and blessing to mankind with a consistency and a vigour, on its more limited scale, that rival the working and directing providence of God, and betray the scarcely concealed presence of a practiced hand and of an indomitable will. Do not let us refuse to recognise it. Do not let us try to explain it or any other hard fact away. Do not let us afford to our enemy one more proof of his practiced genius and adroitness by ceasing, if we can cease, to be believers in his existence. But also do not let us fear him. For us Christians he has ceased to be formidable. Such is the grace and mercy of our Lord that all these evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us will be brought to naught, and by the providence of His goodness will be dispersed. Such is Christ's grace, I say, that in answer to prayer it will assuredly please Him to beat down Satan under the feet of the weakest of His servants. When we are tempted to break any one of the known laws of God,—to disown or to contradict any portion of His truth, we know who is near luring us on, if he only can, to our failure and our ruin; but we know also Who is nearer still—his ancient Conqueror, our own best and wisest Friend; and one aspiration to Jesus Christ from a believing soul will place His grace and strength at the disposal of His servant. The results of Calvary do not lessen with the lapse of time; and, among these, not the least blessed is the enfeeblement of Satan, and the deliverance of those who, through fear of death, would else be all their lifetime subject to bondage.

"ALL THE DAY LONG."

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 9TH, 1876.

"But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."—ROM. x. 21.

ST. PAUL is quoting the prophet Isaiah, and Isaiah is speaking to Israel in the name of God. "But unto Israel He saith, All day long have I stretched out Mine hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." The original word compares Israel to a refractory animal, and St. Paul, or the translation from the Hebrew which he uses, dissolves this expression into two words, "disobedient and gainsaying." To this people who knew not how to obey God, and who perpetually criticised Him, God condescends to say that He stretched out His hands. As applied to a being without body, parts, or passions, this language, of course, cannot be understood literally. It is to be explained by what it means in man. The gesture of stretching out the hands is everywhere understood by human beings: the phrase is natural to all human language. To stretch out the hands is to make appeal or entreaty, with silent, imploring earnestness; and this appeal God made to His "disobedient and gainsaying people"—so says the prophet—so echoes the Apostle, "all the day long."

"All the day long." It is a pregnant expression which may well have enlarged its scope with the lapse of time which opens one vista to the Jewish Prophet, and another to the Christian Apostle, and another, it may be, to us of to-day. "All the day long!" It was a long day which lasted from the work of the great lawgiver in the desert to the captivity in Babylon—some nine centuries at the least. They were centuries marked by vicissitudes of success and failure, of depression and buoyancy, and, as they passed one after another, they developed, with new circumstances, new features in the national character. The Jew of the late monarchy was in many respects a different man from his ancestor who had first crossed the Jordan; but, so far as his resistance to God's will and contradiction of God's servants went, he was entirely unchanged. A later psalmist could sing, "To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness,

when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known My ways." Such was Israel in the desert under the eye and guidance of the great lawgiver: such was he, too, when fresh from the deliverance of the Egyptian bondage—fresh from the wonders of Sinai. Such, too, was he in the Land of Promise, under the Judges first, and then under kings. The history of this people, viewed from a moral as distinct from a merely political standpoint, is a long paroxysm of rebellious folly. It frivolously threw aside its divinely appointed government in order to keep pace with the political fashions of the pagan nations around. It drove for a while the greatest of its monarchs from his throne and capital, and ten tribes rose in successful insurrection against his son. It broke up the unity of the covenant race; and then it broke away, first in this direction and then in that, from the religion of the covenant. No idolatry seemed to be unwelcome to a race which had learned the awful unity and spirituality of God. The hateful nature-worship—for such it was which Jezebel had imported from Tyre,—the cruel rites of Moloch,—the imposing falsehoods, half myths, half philosophies, which were popular among the ruling races on the Euphrates and the Tigris, were pressed to the heart of the people of revelation, and at last the end came. But during all these centuries the God of Israel had stretched out His hands in loving entreaty to the nation which requited Him with disobedience and contradiction. Sometimes by prophets, sometimes by great rulers, sometimes by splendid successes, sometimes by tragical reverses, He bade Israel feel that He was there behind the clouds which seemed to hide Him from His people—a providence of unwearied watchful compassion. And in later ages, when this first day of their history was over, Israel could bear to be told the truth about its own ancient perverseness. Read such a psalm as the 106th, written probably by a psalmist of the date of the captivity who had learnt spiritual wisdom in a hard school of personal experience. It is little more than a catalogue of alternative sins and mercies—the sins of Israel, the mercies of God. After an exalting description of the great deliverance from Egypt, each offence of Israel in those early years shapes a separate stanza in the poem. Each offence is graver than the preceding. They follow on in a tragic series,—the demand for quails, the rebellion of Korah, the worship of the golden calf, the contempt for the report of the Land of Promise, the degrading Baal-peor worship, the friendly relations with the accursed races of Canaan, ending in the guilt of even human sacrifices. And then the history is summarised. "Their enemies oppressed them and had them in subjection. Many a time did He deliver them, but they rebelled against Him with their own inventions, and were brought down in their wickedness. Nevertheless, when He saw their adversity, He heard their complaint. He thought upon His covenant and pitied them according to the multitude of His mercies: yea, He made those that led them away captive to pity them." And towards the close of the period the inexhaustible tenderness of God for Israel is nowhere more fully unveiled than in Hosea, the prophet who describes the sins of the ten tribes with such unsparing accuracy. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me: My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

"All the day long." The briefer and dark day of the captivity was perhaps even more present to the thought of Isaiah than the longer day of Israel's earlier history of mingled triumphs and reverses. If Isaiah is glancing backwards, he is looking forwards too. In the last twenty-six chapters of his prophecy he has his eye upon all that will pass in Babylon long after he himself has been gathered to his fathers. Across the increasing degradation and final catastrophe of the intervening period he sees the captives at home in the great heathen city. Some indeed may sit down and weep, as a psalmist describes them, by its waters, when they remember Zion, hanging their harps upon the trees that are

therein, refusing to charm the ear of the conqueror with the songs of Zion—the Lord's song—in a strange land. Some may say with the great captive who wrote the 119th Psalm, "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes." But with a large majority it is otherwise. They are thoroughly at their ease in the metropolis of pagan magnificence and crime, accommodating themselves with facile readiness to the habits and morals of their masters, forgetting Jerusalem, forgetting the fate of their forefathers. And Isaiah, as he gazes into the future, describes "a people that provoketh Me to anger continually to My face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon the altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; which say, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.'" God has been stretching out His hands to these men in judgments which, hard as they were, were an earnest of His tender mercy. But suffering seems to have said as little to Israel as its brighter day of glory and success. God has other appeals in store. Prophets like Daniel, statesmen like Ezra, will speak in His name. Immense political catastrophes, like that which made the Persian kings masters of the East, will be a stretching out of the hands of God to Israel. But Israel has hitherto retained or recovered little of its ancient self—nothing, it would almost seem, except its perverse self-righteousness. It has no reverence for the Divine law—no submissive silence with which to listen to the Divine voice. The prophet exclaims, almost in despair, in his Master's name, "All the day long have I stretched out Mine hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people."

"All the day long," St. Paul finds the expression ready to his hand in the page of Isaiah, and for St. Paul it means that new epoch which, when he writes, has already opened upon the world. The day, in St. Paul's sense, was the day or age of the Messiah—the years which have passed since Christ and Apostles have spoken to Israel. When St. Paul writes, indeed, a generation of Jews has already grown up to manhood since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ—a generation of those lost sheep of the house of Israel to whom alone our Lord proclaimed He was in the first instance sent. What has become of this generation, or of their immediate predecessors? What has become of it as it has listened to the Divine message—gazed on the outstretched hands of God? There is a remnant, says the Apostle in reply, like that in Elijah's day, saved according to the election of grace. But of the great majority, he adds, the rest were blinded or hardened. They repeat, under new conditions, the obduracy of the Egyptian Pharaoh. They have seen or heard of the miracles of Christ. They have felt the force of His appeal to prophecy, to history, to conscience. That loving providence Who has watched so forbearingly over centuries of disobedience and scorn has at length taken flesh and become visible, and exchanged the secret appeal of ages for the tones of a human voice. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And then He adds, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." He, too, comes to His own, and His own will not receive Him. Throughout the day of His ministerial life He stretches out the hands of compassion and entreaty to a disobedient and gainsaying people. They disobey, and they malign Him. He is in league, they say, with Beelzebub. He is a Samaritan, and has a devil. And when He is gone it fares with the servants as it has fared with the Master. Stephen, before his Jewish judges, exclaims that Israel is, at least, true to its history: it is a rebellious and gainsaying people. "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." And after his conversion—after those rude experiences of Jewish bitterness and violence which he encountered in almost every city where he preached the name of Christ, and which he describes so vividly in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica—St. Paul sees that

Isaiah's words have not yet lost their force—that it is still true that God is stretching out His hands more earnestly, more persuasively, than ever before, to a people which is fixed, as it seemed for the most part,—fixed determinately in disobedience and contradiction.

"All the day long." There was one day of twenty-four hours within this last period unlike any other day before or since; and it is more than probable that St. Paul had this day in his mind when he quoted the words of Isaiah. You know, brethren, what I mean—the day of the passion—the day of Calvary. From the first moment of our Lord Jesus Christ's mental agony in the garden on the preceding evening begins this supreme appeal to the heart and conscience of Israel and of the world, and it lasts until He has bowed His head in death at three o'clock in the following afternoon. It lasts through the agony and bloody sweat—through the treason of the false apostle—through the details of the arrest by the armed mob. It is eloquent for all who have ears to hear as the Divine prisoner is brought before Annas and Caiaphas—as He is spat upon and buffeted in the palace of the high priest—as, denied by the first Apostle, He is led away to Pilate and sent from Pilate to Herod, and mocked by Herod as if He, the eternal wisdom, were a fool, and sent back to Pilate. This appeal, I say, becomes more and more urgent and impassioned as He Who makes it is rejected in favour of the robber Barabbas—is publicly scourged by the pagan magistrate—is crowned with thorns—is robed in purple rags—is invested with a reed for His sceptre—is shown, already covered with His wounds and with His blood, to the angry populace. Nor does it cease as He is condemned to die—as He carries His cross along the way of sorrow to the place of death—as they nail Him to it—as they lift Him up on it between earth and heaven. Nay rather, as the early teachers of His church have felt—it may suffice here to name Origen and the great Augustin—at that moment and for the three hours which followed, Isaiah's words were fulfilled as they never were fulfilled before; for now those hands—the hands of the Providence and the compassion of Christ—are literally stretched forth upon the cross. The Divine attributes which have watched over Israel's destinies are become visible in the passion of the incarnate Son. God's relation with the human history of fifteen hundred years, and of the centuries which are to follow, is epitomised into a short day. Now, as before, He stretches out His hands. It is His own act, though others are empowered to carry it out. Others nailed Him to the cross, and yet He can say, "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Now, as before, His hands, outstretched in anguish and in death, appealed mutely to a people of disobedience and contradiction. True, there is the little group of the faithful—the mother in her agony, the beloved disciple, the thief who prays for one remembrance at the gate of paradise, the centurion who can own the Son of God. But the multitude rages around in coarse, visible, audible rebellion and blasphemy, alas! true to their ancestral spirit. The chief priests and the people vie with each other in the insults which they can offer. "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. He saved others; Himself He cannot save." And His dying eye looks down upon a surging mass of disobedience and contradiction. Israel at the foot of the cross is still what Israel has been throughout the ages, in the wilderness, in Babylon; and over this unhappy race the Divine sufferer must cry, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people."

And we, too, brethren, have each of us His place, wherever it be, somewhere on Mount Calvary. As St. Paul told the Galatians, many years after the events, "Before your eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified." Christ crucified belongs to no one age or place. For true Christian faith, in this matter, time and place are not of much account. Faith bridges over the intervening lands and seas. Faith lives on the holy sites where Jesus is born and dies and rises, and whence He ascends to heaven. Faith leaps across the centuries at a bound—the modern period, the middle ages, the primitive times. Faith sees and experiences over again what the Apostles saw and experienced.

And thus, if I may say so, faith detaches Christ crucified from geography and from chronology. Faith throws Him, in the Christian consciousness, where He is independent of local associations of space, and of the mere sequence of time, where He hangs, as it were, for all time between earth and heaven—hangs on the tree of shame in blessed, glorious, awful isolation as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

What, then, is the appeal which Jesus Christ makes, with His hands stretched out upon the cross, to the hearts of Christians? It is twofold.

It is an appeal on behalf of God's standard of holiness, and against the laxity and sin of man. And He makes this appeal, mark you, by the force of His own example. There are two ways of teaching duty—by word of mouth, or precept, and by personal conduct, or example. The first is necessary: it is indispensable. The second is more effective than the first. Teaching by precept says to the pupil, "Climb that mountain." Teaching by example says, "Let us both climb that mountain. See where I put my feet: put your feet in the same place. We shall get to the top in time." Teaching by precept is the method common to the saints and to the philosophers. Teaching by example is the high prerogative of the saints. Teaching by precept begins with the understanding: it may or may not reach the heart. Teaching by example begins with the heart. The understanding can hardly fail to learn its lesson at a glance. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ uses both methods. Between the Sermon on the Mount and the last discourse in the supper room, He was continually teaching by word of mouth, sometimes single souls, sometimes His disciples, sometimes the Jews, now those who listened, and again those who refused to listen. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little as men could bear the light of heaven—this was His method. But, side by side with the method of precept, He employed the method of example. All through His life He reinforced His precepts by the eloquence of His conduct; but He gathered up all His lessons, or the most difficult of them, into one supreme appeal to the dormant moral sense in man when He raised Himself upon the cross and stretched out His hands to die.

And what are the lessons upon which this crucified teacher lays most stress? They are chiefly, brethren, what we call the passive virtues. Not that He would depreciate those active excellences which pagans admired and practised—temperance, justice, courage, generosity; but there were other virtues which the old heathen world did not deem virtues at all, but only half vices—only poor-spiritness and weakness, and of the beauty of which the Jews themselves made small account. Such are the two which the collect of this day mentions as especially taught us in the passion of Christ—humility and patience. Yes, humility so hard for us to learn, is taught us by Him Who, "being in the form of God, did not claim other than His due in claiming equality with God, yet emptied Himself of His glory, and took on Him the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men, and—a lower depth still—being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And patience—so necessary, sooner or later, for all of us if, as the Apostle puts it, we would be perfect and entire, wanting nothing—patience He teaches us when He Who might have prayed to His Father, Who would presently have sent Him more than twelve legions of angels, was "led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth"—Who "when He," the alone immaculate, "was reviled, reviled not again—when He suffered threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." And closely akin to this is that most precious lesson—resignation to the Divine will. The words in the garden. "Not My will, but Thine be done," echo the words of prophecy—"In the volume of the book it is written of Me that I should fulfil Thy will, O My God. I am content to do it." And thus all is surrendered without reserve when the moment comes—reputation, friends, comfort, life. Not, as I have already hinted, that Christ on the cross teaches only passive virtue. Of the seven last words, one teaches us to work and pray for our enemies; a second to be con-

siderate to those who go wrong; a third, to be dutiful to our parents; a fourth, to thirst for the salvation of others; a fifth, to pray fervently when under a sense of desolation; a sixth, to persevere till we have finished what God has given us to do in this life; and the last to commit ourselves by a conscious act, both in life and in death, into the hands of God.

And, secondly, Jesus Christ with His hands stretched out upon the cross makes an appeal to our sense of what He has done for us. Why is He there? Not for any demerit of His own: not only, or chiefly, to teach us virtue. He is there because otherwise we are lost—because we must be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. He is there because He has first taken our nature,—made Himself our representative, and then, in this capacity, is bearing the penalty which, in virtue of those moral laws whereby the universe is governed, is due to our sins. It is no arbitrary or capricious substitution whereby He thus suffers, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; for He already represents our human nature just as Adam represented it. He acts for us as a parent might act for a young family. He suffers for us as a parent would suffer for a child. And we, each of us, claim our share in this His representative nature—in these His representative acts and sufferings, by that act of adhesion which we call faith. And He, on His part, ratifies our claim by His gifts of grace, through His Spirit and His sacraments. And thus, when He suffers, we, too, suffer by implication. When He dies, we, too, share His death. When He makes satisfaction to the eternal moral laws for the misdeeds of that nature which He has assumed, we who wear it, and who have been the real culprits, make satisfaction, too. "God has made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And thus "we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." This is that unveiling of the inmost heart of the All-Merciful—the mystery of the atonement for sin. It is as opening this mystery to the eyes of Christians—as inviting all and each to come and to share it—that Jesus Christ stretched out His hands upon the cross. "Come unto Me," He says by this silent and expressive action, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden with your sins, and I will give you rest." It is the appeal of love—of love the most tender, the most practical, the most disinterested. The most tender, for, surely, "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" especially considering that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The most practical, since it was love, not in word, but in deed and in truth; not merely profession; not merely feeling; but, after the fashion of true love the gift of self, and the gift of the best that self can give—the gift of life. The most disinterested, for we could offer nothing to provoke it—nothing to reward it. We can give nothing that He has not first given us, and it is to our sense of this love so strong and tender, so practical, so disinterested, that He appeals. Can He appeal in vain? Surely, brethren, when we review our lives seriously, that which must strike most men is God's persevering, overshadowing, ever-pleading mercy. Why lend us life? Why has He, by His free grace, made us, when we could do nothing for ourselves, members of His Christ—His own children and heirs of His kingdom? Why should we have been taught to repeat the creed of His Church,—to read His word,—to think about Him as an example and a Saviour while we were young? Or, if it has been otherwise with us—if we have only known Him at all quite in later life, and are only beginning to know Him now,—why has He singled us out for this distinguishing mercy? Why has He roused us suddenly and sharply from some dream of worldliness or sin?—struck down some near relation, wife, or child?—cut off utterly some source of gain or of amusement?—bid us see the lightning of His judgments scorch some sinner at our side who was, our conscious tell us, no worse a sinner than we?—bid us gaze at some servant of His own, already bright with the lustre of His glory, who has had no greater advantages than we, or who has had fewer and less?—or has guided us, like Augustin, to some one sentence in His word, or has spoken to us, by the voice of a friend who little knew the full meaning of his utterance, some word

which has pierced to the depths of our souls, and made life altogether a different thing to us? What is all this but the perpetual stretching out over us of the hands of the Crucified through all the past years of life as we look back on it? What is it but the incessant appeal of the uncreated mercy to the creature in its ruin? And how has it found—how has it left us? It is still true of us as of the Jews of old—is it not true?—that Christ has stretched out His hands to many a Christian who bears His name, but who, like his Jewish predecessor, is disobedient and gainsaying?

There are two lessons, in conclusion, which we may endeavour to make our own. One is particular. Jesus Christ stretching out His hands in patient compassion on the cross is a model for all Christians who are in any position of authority—not only for monarchs or statesmen or great officers, but for that large number of us, who, in various ways, have others dependent upon us, under our government and influence. Some of us are parents, and have the sacred duty laid upon us of bringing up our children. Others are school-masters, and have voluntarily undertaken to share that duty. Others are heads of houses of business, and have many clerks and young people under their control. Others are masters and mistresses of families, and have domestic servants about them. Like the centurion in the gospel, a great number of Christians are between the two extremes of society—between those who do nothing but command, and those who do nothing but obey. They are men under authority, having others under them; and they say to this one, "Go," and he goeth, and to another "Come," and he cometh; and to the servant "Do this," and he doeth it. It may be, true, but a little brief authority in which we are dressed, but it is authority, and, as such, like that of the Queen upon her earthly throne, it is ennobled as a radiation from that Divine authority which reigns on the throne of heaven. It may be little enough in itself as measured by our poor social scales of greatness; but, be it little or great, it is charged with responsibility. It has a bearing, more or less direct and intimate, upon the eternal destinies of human beings with whom God, in His providence, has thus thrown us into contact. And here, I say, the model for Christians, parents, masters, employers, governors, is rather Christ upon His cross in anxious pain, stretching out the arms of entreaty and compassion, than Christ upon His throne finally dispensing the awards of judgment. Mere right, mere law, mere insistence upon *meum* and *tuum*, may be all very well for a man of the world, now as in the days of paganism. The children of the Crucified have caught sight, or they ought to have caught sight, of a higher ideal to love, which will not take account of dullness or stupidity, not even of stubbornness and perverseness—the love which anticipates the disobedience and the gainsaying, yet stretches forth its hands persistently in tender, incessant invitation—the love which is not balked and chilled by one failure or by two, but which goes on, as if it had not failed at all, stretching out its hands in acts of kindness and consideration—the love which gets no interest for its outlay of pain and grief and care,—which yet shrouds its disappointment as it whispers after the Apostle, "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." This is what Christians in any position of authority should aim at in dealing with those who depend on them. If all their efforts seem failures—if their exertion and their self-denial seem to bring in nothing but a fresh measure of misunderstanding and of scorn, what is this? What is it, my brethren, but association with the Divine sufferer on the hill of Calvary, stretching out His hands, during the long hours of the passion, to a disobedient and gainsaying people? Between His case and ours there is, indeed, this point of difference, the importance of which is incalculable. Full as His heart was of tenderness towards His murderers, He needed no mercy for Himself. The thought never could have occurred to His human soul that He would be judged by the measure which He dealt out to others. With us—with the highest and the best—how utterly is it otherwise! How certain is it that with what measure we mete it shall be measured unto us again. For a Christian to be forbearing and considerate is hardly disinterested, for if he be other than this he can not hope for the merciful forbearance of his God.

And the other lesson is general. Jesus Christ stretches out His hands upon the cross is a warning to us at all times, especially now. Here we are, on Palm Sunday, at the very gate of the most solemn week in the whole year. How many Christians who spent this week with us last year before the cross of Christ have since passed into the eternal world. How many of ourselves, it may be, will never live to see another holy week,—will look back from their place in eternity, be that place what it may, upon this very week as an opportunity which then will have gone for ever? Who knows how it will be with each one of us? Brethren, Christ crucified does indeed stretch out His hands in entreaty and compassion, ready and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, all through the long day of life. While there is life there is hope, there is opportunity, there is heaven and happiness within reach of faith—within reach of seriousness of purpose—within reach of singleness of heart. But the longest day has its evening, and after the evening, we know, comes the darkness of the night. Christ crucified, it has been truly said, has no redemptive relations with the dead. He has either redeemed them, or they are beyond the reach of His redemption. As the soul passes the gate of eternity, the pierced hands of Christ which, during the long day of life, have been outstretched upon the cross, seem to the soul's eye to detach themselves and to fold together as if for judgment.

"There's no repentance in the grave,
Or pardon offered to the dead."

Carry this thought, I beseech you, into and through the solemnities of the coming week. Begin now on Palm Sunday, and accompany your Divine Saviour through each stage of His bitter passion with the thought of eternity clearly before your souls. If the exhortations from human teachers, to which you listen, rouse conscience during these sacred hours into unwonted activity,—if the scenes on which you dwell—the scenes of woe and of victory, the words, the wounds, the darkened sky, the awful silence—speak to your souls now and then, as if there had come over them some breath from another and a distant world—if, as on Tuesday next, human art gives guidance or impetus to hallowed feelings, and for a while you lose sight of the material and transient present in the keener sight of that world which is beyond the senses and which does not pass away,—oh, pray that these higher glimpses, emotions, convictions, may not die away like the vast array of unfruitful feeling which make up so large a part of life. Pray that they may become resolutions, starting-points for a new, for a changed, for a higher level of existence, the reverse of past years of disobedience and contradiction. What will it avail us to have thought much, felt much, hoped for much, in passion time, if, after Easter, all, or nearly all, is forfeited—if we disobey the will, gainsay the truth, of our crucified Master just as before? Why should the dying Son of God almost year by year have to repeat the complaint of the centuries over Christendom, over Christian souls, over your soul and mine,—“All the day long have I stretched out Mine hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people”? It need not be so, since He is more than willing to help us. Brethren, it must not be so, unless all is to be irretrievably lost.

THE INEVITABLENESS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON EASTER SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 16TH, 1876.

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."—ACTS ii. 24.

THIS is the language of the first Christian Apostle in the first sermon that ever was preached in the Church of Christ. St. Peter is accounting for the miraculous gift of languages on the day of Pentecost ; and, after observing that it was, after all, only a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel about the out-pouring of the Spirit in the last days, he proceeds to trace it to its cause. It was the work, he says, of Jesus Christ now ascended into heaven. "He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." But Jesus Christ, he argues, had really ascended into heaven, because He had first really risen from His grave ; and it is to St. Peter's way of accounting for Christ's resurrection that I invite your attention to-day, as being the first apostolic statement on the subject that was given to the world.

My brethren, even if this point were only one of antiquarian interest it surely would be full of attractions for every intelligent man to know how the first Christians thought about the chief truths of their faith, considering the influence that that faith has had, and still has on the development of the human race. But, for us Christians, concern in this matter is more exacting and more urgent. Our hopes and fears, our

depressions and our enthusiasms, our improvement or our deterioration, are bound up with it. "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain. Your faith is also vain."

Let us, then, listen to what the Apostle St. Peter says about a subject upon which his opportunities—to say nothing of higher credentials—qualified him to speak with authority.

First of all, then, St. Peter states the fact that Christ had risen from the dead. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Let us remember that he is preaching in Jerusalem, the scene of the death and resurrection of Christ, and as his sermon shows, he is preaching to some who had taken part in the crucifixion. Not more than seven weeks have yet passed since those events—just about the time that has passed since Quinquagesima Sunday; and in Jerusalem, we may be sure, men did not live as fast as they do in a European capital in this age of telegraphs and railroads. An event like the crucifixion, in a town of that size so far removed from the greater centres of human life, would have occupied general attention for a considerable period. It would have been discussed and rediscussed in all its bearings; and all that happened at the time and immediately afterwards—the supposed disappointment of the disciples, the presumed ruin of the cause, as well as the agony and humiliation of the Master—would have been still ordinary topics of conversation in most circles of Jewish society. It was, then, to persons keenly interested in the subject, and who had opportunities at hand of testing the exact truth of what he said, that Peter states, thus calmly and unhesitatingly, the fact of the resurrection. He states it as just as much a truth of history as the crucifixion in which his hearers and themselves had taken part. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And then he adds, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." "This Jesus," he adds a little afterwards, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Not one or two favoured disciples, but all, even the doubter—all had seen their beloved Master: they had heard the tone of that familiar voice: they had seen the wounds of the passion: they recognised in repeated conversations the continuity of heart, of thought, of purpose. It was the Jesus of old days, only radiant with a new and awful glory. On the very day that He rose He had been seen five times, and "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallable proofs being seen of His disciples forty days and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." And some twenty-six years later, when St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Church of Corinth, there were, he says, more than two hundred and fifty

persons still alive who had seen Jesus Christ after His resurrection on a single occasion. The number of witnesses to the fact of the resurrection, to whom St. Peter could appeal, and whom his hearers might cross-question if they liked, will account for the simplicity and confidence of his assertion. In those days men had not yet learned to think more of abstract theories than of well-attested facts. The world had not yet heard of that singular state of mind with which we of to-day are not altogether unfamiliar, which holds that some *à priori* doctrine about the nature of things, or stranger still, about the temper and moods of human thought, is a sufficient reason for refusing to listen to the evidence which may be produced in favour of a fact which interferes with these theories. Nobody, it may be added—nobody who professed to believe in an Almighty God—thought it either reverent or reasonable to say that He could not, for sufficient reasons, modify or innovate upon his ordinary rules of working, if He chose to do so.

St. Peter, then, preached the resurrection as a fact, and, as we know with great and immediate results. But how did he account for the resurrection? What was the reason which he gave for its having happened at all? This is the second point to which I invite your attention, and it will detain us rather longer than the first.

St. Peter, then, says that Christ was raised from the dead because it was not possible that He should be holden of death. Thus you will observe that St. Peter's thought about this matter is the very opposite to that of many persons of our day. They say in so many words, that no evidence will convince that Christ has risen, because they hold it to be antecedently impossible that He should rise. St. Peter, on the other hand, almost speaks as if he could dispense with evidence, so certain is he that Jesus Christ must rise. In point of fact, as we know, St. Peter had his own experience to fall back upon. He had seen his risen Master on the day of the resurrection, and often since : but so far was this evidence of his senses from causing him any perplexity, that it only fell in with the anticipations which he had now formed on other and independent grounds. It was not possible, he says, that Christ should be holden or imprisoned by death.

It will do us good, my brethren, as fellow believers with St. Peter, to spend some little time upon his grounds for saying this,—to consider, so far as we may, the reasons for this Divine impossibility.

And here, first of all, we find the reason which lay, so to speak, nearest to the conclusion, and it was intended to convince the Apostle's hearers in the sermon itself. "It was not possible that Christ should be holden of death ; for David speaketh concerning Him." It was, then, Jewish prophecy which, if I may say so, forbade the Christ to remain in His grave—which made His resurrection nothing less than a Divine necessity. As to the principle of this argument there would have been

no controversy between St. Peter and the Jews. The Jews believed in the reality and in the compulsive force of prophecy—of that variety of prophecy which predicts events that are strictly future, just as distinctly as do Christians. The prophets, in the belief of the Jews, were the confidants of God. God whispering into the ear of their souls by His Spirit His secret resolutions for the coming time. “Surely,” could exclaim the prophet Amos,—“Surely the Lord will do nothing but He revealeth His secret to His servants the prophets.” And when once God had thus spoken, it was felt by Jews as it is felt by Christians. His word standeth sure, His gifts and calling are without repentance. The prophetic word became, in virtue of the moral attributes of God, a restraint upon that very liberty of God, of which it was the product, until it was fulfilled. It constituted, within the limits of its application, a law of necessity, to which men and events, and, if need were, nature, had to bend. And for all who believed in its author, the supposition that it would come to nothing after all was, to use St. Peter’s phrase, “not possible.” That word could not return empty. It must accomplish the work for which God had sent it forth, since it bound him to an engagement with those who uttered, and with those who heard, his message. Of course, my brethren, the true drift of a prophecy may easily be mistaken, and God is not responsible for eccentric guesses as to His meaning, in which well intentioned men of lively imagination may possibly indulge. We have lived, in this generation, to hear some very confident guesses based on the supposed meaning of prophecy respecting the end of the world, or some impending general catastrophe. The dates assigned for such occurrences have passed, and religion would be seriously discredited if, indeed, the sacred word itself were at fault, instead of the fervid imagination of some apocalyptic expositor. But where a prediction is clear, it does bind him, who is its real author, to its fulfilment, which in the event, will be recognised as such; and such a prediction of the resurrection of Messiah St. Peter finds in the sixteenth Psalm, where David, as on a greater scale in the twenty-second Psalm, loses the sense of his own personal circumstances in the impetus and ecstasy of the prophetic spirit which possesses him, and describes a personality of which, indeed, he was the type, but which altogether transcends his own. “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” David, so St. Peter argues, utters these words, but of David himself they are not strictly true. “David,” he says, “is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is among us even unto this day.” Or, as St. Paul puts it, when appealing to this very Psalm in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, “David, after he had served

his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption; but He Whom God raised up saw no corruption." And the meaning of the psalm was so clear to one school of the Jewish doctors that, unable as they were to reconcile it with the facts of David's history, they invented the fable that His body was miraculously preserved from corruption. David was really speaking at the moment in the person of Messiah, and his language created the necessity that Messiah should rise from the dead; or, as St. Peter puts it, his language made it impossible that the Christ should be holden by death. God had spoken in other passages, no doubt, but especially in this word: his word could not return unto him empty.

Observe, my brethren, that St. Peter had not always felt and thought thus. He had known this sixteenth Psalm all his life; but long after he had followed Jesus Christ about Galilee and Judea he had been ignorant of its true meaning. Only little by little it is that any one of us learns God's full truth and will; and so lately as the morning of the resurrection, St. Matthew says of both St. Peter and St. John that, as yet, they knew not the Scripture that Christ must rise again from the dead. Since then, the Holy Spirit had come down. He had poured a flood of light into the mind of His Apostles, and over the sacred pages of the Old Testament; and the necessity for the resurrection, which even Jewish expositors might have recognised if they would, became abundantly plain to them. May that same Spirit teach us, as He taught our spiritual forefathers, the true meaning of His word!

And a second reason which would have shaped St. Peter's language lay in the character of Jesus Christ. It was our Lord's character, not less than His miracles, which drew human hearts to Him—which led or forced them to give up all that the world could offer, for the happiness of following and serving Him. Now, of our Lord's character, its leading feature, if I may so speak with reverence, was its simple truthfulness. It was morally impossible for Him to hold out prospects which would never be realised, or to use words which He did not mean. Nay, He insisted upon simple sincerity of language in those who came into His company. He would not allow the young man to call Him "Good Master," when the expression was, in His mouth, a mere phrase. He would not accept pretensions to following Him whithersoever He went, or aspirations to sit on His right hand or on His left in His kingdom, till men had weighed their words, and were quite sure that they meant what their words involved. Unless, then, He was like the Pharisees whom He condemned for laying burdens upon others which they would not touch themselves, it might be taken for granted that if He promised He would perform—that His promise made performance morally binding—made non-performance morally impossible. This was the feeling of His disciples about Him—that He was too wise to predict the impossible—

too sincere to promise what He did not mean. Now, Jesus Christ had, again and again, said that He would be put to a violent death, and that after dying He would rise again. Sometimes, as to the Jews in the temple when He cleansed it in the early days of His ministry, He expressed His meaning in the language of metaphor. "Destroy," He said, "this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews rallied Him on the absurdity of undertaking to reconstruct an edifice in three days which had taken forty-six years to build; but the real sense of the words was plain to the disciples by the gesture which had accompanied them. And in later years they understood the full sense in which He termed His human body a temple, namely, because in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

And sometimes He fell back upon ancient Hebrew history, and compared that which was to happen to Himself with the miraculous adventure of the prophet who shrank from the mission which God had assigned to him. When the Pharisees, irritated at His stern rebuke of their blasphemous levity in assigning His miracle on the blind and dumb man to the agency of Beelzebub, asked Him for a sign—that is, for some credentials of His mission—He contented Himself with saying that as Jonah had been three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of man would be in the heart of the earth. In other words, His right to speak and act as He did would be proved by His rising from the dead. But with His disciples He used neither metaphor nor historical parallel. He said simply, on three occasions at the least, as the hour of His sufferings approached, that He should be crucified and should rise from death. Peter himself had, on the first of these occasions, rebuked Him, as we know, and had been rebuked in turn. And thus He was pledged, if we may reverently say so, to this particular act of resurrection. He was pledged to the Jewish people. He was pledged to its rulers and its governing classes. He was pledged, especially, to His own chosen band of followers. He could not have remained in His grave—I will not say without dishonour, but without entailing that revulsion of feeling which is always provoked, and justly provoked, by the exposure of baseless pretensions. It may be, indeed, it has been urged, that the resurrection foretold by Christ was not a literal resurrection of His dead body, but only a recovery of His ascendancy, His credit, His popular authority—obscured as these had been for a while by the tragedy of the crucifixion—in the apprehension of His disciples and of the world. The word "resurrection," according to this supposition, is, in His mouth, a purely metaphorical expression. It is used to describe not anything which affected Jesus Christ Himself, but only a revulsion of opinion and feeling about Him in the minds of others. Socrates had had to drink the fatal hemlock, and the body of Socrates had long since mingled

with the dust ; but Socrates, it might be said, had, in a sense, risen—risen in the intellectual triumphs of his pupils—risen in the enthusiastic admiration of succeeding ages ; and the method and the words of Socrates have been preserved for all time in a literature that will never die. If Christ was to be put to death by crucifixion, He would triumph, even after a death so shameful and degrading, as Socrates and others had triumphed before Him. To imagine for Him an actual exit from His tomb is said to be a literalisation natural to uncultivated ages, but impossible when the finer suggestiveness of human language has been felt to transcend the letter. An obvious reply to this explanation is that it arbitrarily makes our Lord use a literal and a metaphorical expression in two successive clauses of a single sentence. He is literal, 'it seems, when He predicts His crucifixion. There is no doubt on any side about that. The world has agreed with the Church as to the fact of His being crucified. Tacitus mentions His death as well as the evangelists. But if He is to be understood literally when He foretells His cross, why is He to become suddenly metaphorical when He foretells His resurrection? Why should not His resurrection, if it be only metaphorical, be preceded by a metaphorical crucifixion, too,—a crucifixion of the thought—a crucifixion of the will—a crucifixion of His reputation—not the literal nailing of His human body to a wooden cross? Why does this fastidious spiritualism, if it be such, which shrinks from the idea of a literal rising out of a literal grave, not shrink equally from a literal nailing to a literal cross? It is impossible, my brethren, seriously to maintain, on any grounds that can be accepted by an honest interpretation of language, that our Lord Himself could have meant that He would be literally crucified, but would only rise in a metaphorical sense. He meant that the one event would be just as much, or just as little, a matter of fact as the others, and any other construction of His words would never have originated except with those who wish to combine some sort of faint, lingering respect for the language of the Master, with a total disbelief in the supreme miracle which has made Him what He is to Christendom. No, it must be said, if Jesus Christ had not risen from the grave, He would not have kept His engagements with His disciples, or with the world. This was the feeling of the men who knew and who loved Him best. This was the feeling of St. Peter, ripened, no doubt, only lately into a sharply defined conviction, but based on years of intimate companionship—that after He, so scrupulously truthful, so invariably wise, had once said that He would rise from death, any other event was simply impossible. All was really staked thus on His really rising again, and when He did rise, He was declared, as His Apostle said, to be the Son of God with power, in respect of His higher eternal nature by this resurrection from the dead. Those who cling to His human character, and yet deny His resurrection, would do well to consider that

they must choose between their moral enthusiasm on the one hand, and their unbelief on the other ; since it is the character of Christ which, even more than the language of prophecy, made the idea that He would not rise after death so impossible to His first disciples.

Nor have we yet exhausted St. Peter's reasons for this remarkable expression.

You will remember, my brethren, that in the sermon which St Peter preached to a crowd shortly after this, after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, he went over a great deal of the same ground as that which he had traversed in this his first sermon on the day of Pentecost. He told his hearers, among other things, that they had killed the Prince of Life, Whom God had raised from the dead. Remark, brethren, that title—the Prince of Life. Not merely does it show how high above all earthly royalties was the crucified Saviour in the heart and faith of His Apostle : it connects the thought of St. Peter in this, the earliest stage of his ministry, with the language of his Divine Master, on the one side, and that of the Apostles Paul and John upon the other. Our Lord had said, “ I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He had explained the sense of this last word, “ life,” by saying that as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. He had complained to the men of His time, “ Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life ;” and St. John had said of Him that in Him was life ; and St. Paul, as in to-day's epistle, calls Him “ Christ Who is our life.” When, then, St. Peter names Him the Prince of Life, he is referring to this same truth of his Master, and it is, in fact, the key-note of the Gospel. That “ What is life ?” is a question which, even at this date of the world's history, no man can really answer. We do not know what life is in itself. We can only register its symptoms. We see growth, and we see movement, and we say, “ Here is life.” It exists in one degree in the tree ; in a higher degree in the animal ; in a higher degree still in man. In beings above man, we cannot doubt, it is to be found on a still grander scale ; but in all these cases, be it what it may, it is a gift from another, and having been given, it might be modified or withdrawn. Who is He in Whom life resides originally ?—He Who owes it to no patron—He from Whom no other being can conceivably take it ? Only He, the self-existent, lives of right—lives because He cannot but live—lives an original as distinct from a derived life. This is true of the eternal Three Who yet are One, but the Christian revelation assures us that it is only true of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, because, by an unbegotten and unending communication of deity, they receive such life from the eternal Father. And hence our Lord says, “ As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” Not merely life, let me repeat it, but life *in Himself*. He is thus to be equal with the eternal Giver, Fountain and Source of life ; nay, rather,

He is to be, with reference to all created beings, the Life—their Creator, their Upholder, their last end. For, says St. Paul, “By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”

Thus, then, this is the full sense of St. Peter's expression—the Prince of Life.

And in the truth which it teaches as to our Lord's jurisdiction over life, based on the truth of His eternal nature, we may trace a third reason for St. Peter's expression in the text. How could the very Lord and Source of life be subdued by death? If, for reasons of wisdom and mercy, He subjected the nature which He had made His own to the king of terrors it was surely not in the course of nature: it was a violence to nature that this should be. And, therefore, when the object had been achieved He would rise, St. Peter implies, by an inevitable rebound: He would rise by the force of things: He would rise by the inherent energy of His irrepressible life. The real wonder, from St. Peter's point of view, would be if such a Being as Christ were not to rise. The pains of death were loosed, not in an extraordinary effort as in your case or mine, but because it was impossible that He, the Prince of Life, should be holden of it.

Observe, brethren, before we leave this point, how St. Peter deals with the subject. He looks at it, if I may so speak, from above rather than from below. He asks himself what his existing faith about the Son of God points to, rather than what history proves to have taken place. He is, for the moment, more concerned for the honour of his Master than for the value and significance of His acts for us. To St. Peter it is less strange that there should be an innovation upon nature, like the resurrection of a dead body, than it would be if a being like Jesus Christ, having been put to death, did not rise. St. Peter is very far from being indifferent to the proof of the fact that He did rise. He often insists upon this proof, but just as St. John calls Christ's miracles His works, meaning by that that they were just what such a being might be expected to perform, so St. Peter treats His resurrection from the dead as perfectly natural to Him—as an event which any man or angel, with sufficient knowledge, might have calculated beforehand, just as astronomers predict unerringly the movements of the heavenly bodies. “God hath raised Jesus from the dead,” he says, “because it was impossible that death should continue to hold Him.” The buried Christ could not remain in His grave. He was raised from it in virtue of a Divine necessity, and this necessity, while in its original form it is strictly proper to His case, points to kindred necessities which affect His servants and His Church.

Let us, in conclusion, briefly consider them.

See, first, the impossibility for us Christians, too, of being buried for

ever in the tomb in which we shall be laid at death. We, too, shall rise : we must rise. In this, as in other matters, as He is so are we in this world. To us as to Him, although in a different way, God has pledged Himself. There is a difference, indeed, such as might be expected, between our case and His. In Him an eternal vital force beside the voice of prophecy made resurrection from the dead necessary. In us there is no such intrinsic force—only a powerful guarantee to us from without. He could say of the Temple of His body, "I will raise it up in three days." We can only say that God will raise us up, we know not when. But this we do know—that "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us." This we do know—that "we all must be manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The law of justice and the law of love combine to create a necessity which requires a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.

See, too, here the principle of the many resurrections in the Church of Christ. As with the bodies of the faithful, so it is with the body of the Redeemer. The Church of Christ is, as St. Paul says, Christ Himself in history. He says as much when He tells us that as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body, so also is Christ. The Church is Christ's body—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. But the force of this language is limited by the fact, equally warranted by Scripture, that the Church has in it a sinful element—a human element which, unlike the humanity of Christ, is weak and sinful. The Church of Corinth itself, to which St. Paul wrote the glowing sentence which I have just quoted, was filled, he tells us, with strife, irreverence—worse sins than these. Hence the Church of Christ has, again and again, in the course of her history, seemed to be dead and buried outright—buried away in some one of the lumber rooms of the past ; and the world has gone its way rejoicing, as if all was over—as if, henceforth, unbelief and ungodliness would never be disturbed in their reign on earth by protests from heaven. But suddenly the tomb has opened. There has been a profound agitation in men's consciences—a moral movement—a feeling that all is far from right ; and then a new uprising of the spirit of devotion—a social stir—literary, missionary, philanthropic activity—conspicuous self-sacrifice, and the world awakes one fine morning to an uneasy suspicion that John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that mighty works do show forth themselves in him. The truth is that the Christ Himself has again burst His tomb and is abroad among men. So it was after the deep degradation of the papacy in the tenth century. So it was after the accumulated corruptions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. So it was in this country after the

great triumph of misbelief and profanity in the middle of the seventeenth century ; and, later after that indifference to all true religion during the greater part of the eighteenth. The oppression, the degradation, the enfeeblement of the Church of Christ is possible enough. Too generally, the world only binds and makes sport of Samson, because Samson has first yielded to the blandishments of Delilah. But there is a vital force in the Church of Christ which asserts, and must assert, itself from generation to generation. If the crucifixion is re-enacted, in the holy body—if, as St. Paul phrases it, we fill up from century to century that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, the resurrection is re-enacted, too. It is not possible that the body of Christ, instinct with His force and with His vital and quickening Spirit, should be permanently holden down by death. Each apparent failure and collapse is followed assuredly by an outburst of energy and moral glory which reveals the presence of the living Christ—His presence, Who, if crucified through weakness, yet lives by the power of God.

And we have here, lastly, what should be the governing principle of our own personal lives. If we should have been laid in the tomb of sin, it ought to be impossible that we should be holden of it. I say "ought to be," because, as a matter of fact, it is not impossible. God only is responsible for the resurrection of His Son,—for the resurrection of the Christian's body,—for the perpetuity through its successive resurrections of the Christian Church : and therefore it is impossible that either one or the other of these should permanently succumb to the empire of death. But God Who raises our bodies, whether we will or not, does not raise our souls from sin without our corresponding with His grace ; and it is quite in our power to refuse this necessary correspondence. That we should rise, then, from sin is a moral—it is not a physical—necessity ; but, surely, we ought to make it as real a necessity as if it were physical. For any man who feels in his soul the greatness and the love of Jesus Christ, it ought to be morally impossible to remain in this tomb. "Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." If Lent is the time for mourning the past, Easter is the time for bracing, definite resolutions—for vigorous efforts which shall control the future. If we are unaided and alone, such efforts and resolutions would be failures, in that they would be like the vain flutterings of a bird against the wires of the cage which imprison it. But He Who has broken the gates of brass and smitten the bars of iron in sunder will not fail us if we seek His strength, and the permanence and the splendour of His life in glory may, and should be, the warrant of our own.

One word more. A real resurrection with Christ will make and leave some definite mark upon our life. Let us resolve this day, brethren, to do, or to leave undone, henceforth, some one thing which will make the

needful difference. Conscience will instruct us in this matter if we ask it, and if any of you are looking out for a way of showing gratitude to our risen Redeemer, I would suggest that you should send the best contribution you can afford to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in support of the mission at Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa. There, a small band of noble men, under the leadership of a bishop of apostolic life, are making efforts, worthy of the best days of the Church, to propagate the faith among races to whom no depths of degradation and misery, that are possible for human beings, are practically unknown, but races which are as capable as ourselves of rising with Christ to a new life of moral and mental glory. According to the accounts which have reached this country quite recently, just at the moment when new and unlooked-for opportunities are presenting themselves to the servants of Christ, and a real inroad upon heathendom and upon slavery and the vices which mark its empire is possible as it has never been possible before since the mission began, their scanty means altogether failed them. They literally have not enough to eat, much less to attempt new enterprises of Christian charity such as the circumstances imperatively demand. Shall we leave them to despondency, to retreat, to failure, with the heathen before them stretching out their hands, almost within sight of the cross of their Redeemer, and their God, with the impure imposture of the false prophet hard by, ready to take advantage of our supineness? Surely, it cannot but be that some who hear me will make an effort worthy of Easter gratitude. There will be no collection after the service, but, as I have said, I am sure that the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel will gladly receive subscriptions for an object than which nothing more truly Christian and philanthropic—nothing more worthy of men who humbly hope that they have their part in the first resurrection, and in its Divine necessities, can well be imagined.

CHRIST'S EASTER GREETING.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 23RD, 1876.

"The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."—JOHN xx. 19.

THIS was our Lord's fifth appearance on the day of His rising from the dead. First He had met the devout women in the early morning as they were on their way to tell the disciples that the sepulchre was empty. He met them, saying "All hail," and they in their joy held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Next, somewhat later, He appeared to Mary Magdalen in the garden outside the sepulchre which Peter and John had just left. She knew Him by His way of pronouncing her name—"Mary." She would have seized Him in her ecstasy, but He said "Touch Me not." Thirdly, in the afternoon, He joined two sorrowful travellers walking along the road to Emmaus, and, after they had poured out to Him their tale of disappointment and perplexity at the strange rumours which had reached them as to what had happened in the morning of the day, He first interested them by showing how all that had occurred was in accordance with prophecy, and then He revealed Himself to them in the sacrament of His love, and vanished from sight. On their return to Jerusalem they found that at some earlier hour He had appeared to St. Peter alone, but of this fourth appearance no details are preserved. And now the evening had come. The story of the empty grave had made its way, no doubt, before this, very widely in Jerusalem, and it had produced its effects upon the passions of the great and upon the passions of the multitude. The official explanation was circulated without loss of time. What had happened was represented as a pious fraud on the part of the disciples. But there must have been many men who repeated this, and who tried, as men will, to persuade themselves of its truth by a process of incessant repetition, while at heart they suspected something else. They felt that the antecedents of the prophet of Nazareth made something else at least possible. They knew that His immediate followers were men with no resources at command—with no skill or craft of purpose—with no social influence. Still, there was the empty grave. It had been emptied in some way : that was certain. It might

have been emptied by some unearthly power after all. Who could say? This sort of suspicion would probably have haunted the brain of many a Jew, and any such suspicion would, of course, have made the religious system or creed which occasioned it an object of fear—an object of suppressed, unacknowledged fear—a fear which tried to evaporate in expressions of affected contempt, but which obstinately survived the experiment. And fear, we all know, is wont to be cruel. Especially fear of an unknown religious influence is apt to be cruel beyond other varieties of fear. It has been guilty of some of the worst crimes that have disgraced human history. The disciples would have been well aware of the strength and character of this public feeling in Jerusalem; so they naturally kept themselves out of sight. They did not wish to provoke violence by showing themselves at nightfall in the public streets. They were assembled in an upper room mainly for fear of the Jews, but also, no doubt, to seek instruction and consolation at the hands of their leading members, and to learn all that could be learnt of the event of the day. It was when they were thus assembled, the doors being shut, that Jesus came and stood in the midst and said, "Peace be unto you."

He came they knew not how. Only they knew that the chamber was strongly secured against intrusion or surprise. No bolt was withdrawn, no door was opened, no breach was made in the wall of their place of assembly. There was no visible movement as from without to within, or from point to point. One moment they were, as they thought, alone, and the next they looked, and lo! an outline, a form, a visible face and body, a solid human frame, stood before them, as if it had been yielded by the thin atmosphere which they breathed. Jesus came and stood in the midst and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you." They gazed at Him—they gazed at each other—in bewilderment, in terror. They supposed that they had seen a spirit. They were with difficulty reassured—so St. Luke's report seems to imply—by the means which our Lord took to convince them that a body of flesh and bones was before them, and finally, they were glad, as St. John says, when they saw the Lord.

It would be interesting to dwell at length on the character of our Lord's Easter appearances, as illustrating the nature of His perpetual presence in the Christian Church, but this would not leave us time for considering the words which He uttered—words which are always full of comfort and invigoration for Christians, but especially so in connection with the yearly festival of the resurrection—"Peace be unto you."

"Peace be unto you." Remember that this greeting was customary amongst the Jews and the Semitic peoples generally in that age. It was, with very slight variations, of high antiquity. With a like expression to this the steward of Joseph's house calmed the anxiety of his master's brethren, and Jethro gave his permission to his great son-in-law to revisit Egypt; and Eli soothed the troubles of the sorrowing Hannah; and Jonathan concluded that pathetic compact with David. With a like greeting to this, David's young men were instructed to preface their demand on the churlish sheep-farmer on Mount Carmel, and David himself was recognised as king in the review of the forces at Ziklag; and Absalom was empowered to pay the vow in Hebron—the pretext that thinly veiled his intended rebellion; and the Syrian Naaman who, after his cure in the waters of the Jordan, had thankfully returned to make his acknowledgments to the prophet of Israel, was dismissed by Elisha.

"Peace be unto thee"—"Go in peace." The expression is varied according to the circumstances of the person addressed. If a psalmist is blessing the holy city, he exclaims "Peace be within thy walls. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace within thee." Even the heathen kings had learnt this language. Achish dismisses David from Gath where the jealousy of the Philistine lords made his presence unsafe, with a "Go in peace." Nebuchadnezzar prefaces his proclamation to his subject states, by the words "Peace be multiplied unto you." When the jailer at Philippi tells Paul and Silas that the magistrates had ordered their release, he bids them depart and go in peace. When St. James is describing, not without

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a vein of refined irony, the conduct of rich Christians who are full of sympathy for the poor, but who do nothing to help them, he makes them say to the objects of their sterile compassion: "Depart in peace: be ye warmed and filled."

Thus observe, first, that this invocation of peace at the beginning or ending of intercourse was of high antiquity, and next, that in our Lord's day it had become just as much part of the social habits of the people as the custom of saying, "Good morning" is amongst ourselves. All the Semitic nations—the Syrians, the Arabs, and, as we know from the Talmud, the Jews of the dispersion, used it as a matter of course. In earlier days, no doubt, men had invoked peace from heaven with the utmost deliberation and seriousness. In the age of the kings and the prophets, the phrase had still a living meaning. The speaker actually prayed for the blessing of peace on the person whom addressed. It is a gradual process, brethren, by which the real fresh language of a primitive time is stiffened into the unmeaning forms of the society of a later age, but, as far as this expression, "Peace be unto you," is concerned, the process was already complete in the days of our Lord. And yet, mark you, He did not scruple to avail Himself of the conventional phrase. When He dismissed the woman with the issue of blood who had cured herself by touching Him in the crowd, He bade her go in peace. When He blessed the Magdalen who had washed His feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, "Thy faith hath saved thee," He said, "go in peace." He instructed His disciples on entering a house to say solemnly, "Peace be to this house;" and the Apostles continued the language of their Master. St. Peter closes his first epistle with, "Peace be with all that are in Christ Jesus." St. John writes to Gaius, "Peace be to thee," St. Paul wishes peace to the brethren at Ephesus.—peace to those who walk according to the rule of the cross in Galatia. But it would be a great mistake to infer that, because our Lord and His Apostles used conventional language, therefore they used it conventionally. A conscientious man in all ages will do all that can to mean what he says when he uses words which are prescribed to him by custom or by etiquette, and, among the great men who have appeared in different ages as the teachers of mankind, the majority, I take it, have been less forward to employ new language as the vehicle of their thought than to breathe a new meaning into old words. In Him Who was no mere man—our Lord Jesus Christ—this latter method is especially observable. He picks up, as it were from the roadside, the common words and phrases which fall from men as they saunter unthinkingly through life. He restores to language its original power; I might almost say its original sanctity, since it is a native product of the immortal soul. He invigorates the form from which all meaning has long ago evaporated, through the lapse of ages, with a new life and power.

"Peace be unto you." No doubt many a Rabbi used that phrase before and after, in the schools of Jerusalem, as the mere symbol of that self-respect which prudently respects others in daily intercourse; but, be sure, no one word of Jesus Christ was merely conventional. From His first lisplings in infancy to His last charge on the mount of ascension, His work was to bring reality in all its shapes into human life—reality in dealing with God, reality in dealing with other men, reality in dealing with self, reality in thought, reality in conscience, reality in the exercise of the affections, and, as Isaiah had especially foretold, reality in the use of language. Once before, in the supper-room, He had used words which rescued the blessing of peace, as pronounced by Himself, from the atmosphere of unmeaning formalism which surrounded it in the society of the day. "Peace I leave with you: My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And when he stood among His Apostles on the evening of the day of His return from the habitations of the dead, it was with a fullness of meaning, such as the phrase had never, never had before, that He uttered His "Peace be unto you." The word which is translated "Peace" does not in the original mean only, or chiefly, rest from the absence of disturbance. The Hebrew root-word means "whole," "entire." It is applied to a person or thing which is as it should be according to its origin or its capacity. Of this

state of well-being, freedom from disturbance is either a condition or a result. But here, as so often else in the history of language, the incidental meaning of the word has permanently displaced the original, and we translate it into all the modern languages of the world by an expression which never suggests to us the idea of completeness but only that of tranquillity or rest. But when our Lord, speaking as He did in Syro-Chaldee, used the word, He had an eye, we may be sure, on the original sense. He meant not merely tranquillity, but that which leads to it. He meant well-being, and well-being not in any of the contracted and earthly senses which limit it to the things of this life, but well-being in its largest sense as effecting the highest interest of a being like man.

"Peace be unto you." What would have been the sense suggested by the words to those who heard them in the upper chamber? Not peace with the Jews without. That could not be. Of the revelations between His followers and the world which rejected Him our Lord has said, "Think ye that I am come to send peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division." His followers, indeed, were, in the apostolic words, "so much as lieth in them to live peaceably with all men." But this region of peaceable intercourse could only extend where the truths of faith were not imperilled. No loyal soldier of Christ might for a moment affect indifference to the claims of the faith. Peace with the Jews, then, like peace with the non-Christian world in later ages, was only to be had by a surrender of the honour and cause of Christ. In other words, it was impossible.

Nor, secondly, as it seems, did He mean "peace among yourselves." Doubtless the blessing of peace among Christians is of priceless value for its own sake, as involving the best spiritual blessings to those concerned, and as an evidence to the world of the truth of our Lord's mission. "By this shall men know that ye are My disciples, that ye have love one to another." But this peace was not then especially needed. The instinct of self-preservation drew and kept together as yet the hearts of the servants of the Crucified. The sad day of divisions among Christians was yet to come. After Pentecost the believers were "of one heart and one soul, and had all things common." It was otherwise even before the Apostles had left the earth. "I hear," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, "that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it." The endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," was scarcely less difficult in the later apostolic ages than it is now. But on the day of the resurrection the disciples had met, as do members of a family, under the pressure of a great anxiety. There is no thought of division when all hearts are really open to fears, hopes, sympathies which take possession of the soul.

The peace which our Lord breathed on the assembled disciples was peace in the individual soul. This was what they needed then, as so many of us need now. First of all, the peace which conquers or ignores fear. There they were when He came, huddled together, for fear of the Jews. The Jews, they knew, were outside, seeking an opportunity for insulting, arresting, persecuting, murdering them. They could hear, perhaps, the shouts of the wild and cruel fanatics who were urging forward a religious persecution. They knew what had been done to their Master. What could they, the disciples, expect? Had not He forewarned them in His agony, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry"? And did not that saying apply, in its degree, to themselves, as more directly and overwhelmingly to the people at large? They were agitated, convulsed, almost paralysed with fear. Any new tragedy was possible at any moment, and, with this possibility, all was disquiet and confusion. And then He came, they knew not how, the doors being shut, and said, "Peace be unto you." They had heard rumours of His resurrection; they had not realised what it meant. They did not think of Him as One Whom they would see again with their bodily eyes. "They supposed," St. Luke reports, "that they had seen a spirit." And then He told them to touch Him freely, and to convince themselves that He was a form of flesh and bones; and He asked for food, and ate it before them with the same object. And then He repeated the words a second time—"Peace be unto you." They knew now that

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He was there, and from His lips the blessing of peace meant safety—safety in some way or other from every adversary. They knew His love : they had just learnt His power. The Jewish persecutor might rage on : the disciples heeded not. They were—they knew it—no longer alone. It was not that the old dangers had ceased, but they had lost their sway over the imagination and the will. He had lifted them up into a new atmosphere of thought and feeling and resolution. He had given them His peace.

This is a primary effect of Christ's blessing of peace whispered from age to age in the upper chamber of the Christian soul. It distracts attention from things without ; it does not destroy them. Sickness, death, the loss of friends, the opposition of those who have true faith in, or love for, Jesus Christ, the bad tempers, the prejudices, the follies of those around us, the troubles, the heart-aches of the natural life, all remain as before, but they no longer absorb attention. The eye of the soul is turned inward ; the eye of the soul is fixed henceforth on the Divine and the Eternal. These outward things still exist—still have their sphere of incidence ; but then they are seen in their true proportions : they do not obscure the higher realities. They are not feared, for He has said "Peace be unto you."

"Peace be unto you." Did this only confer freedom from outward anxiety on the waiting disciples ? Surely not. "That we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, should pass our time in rest and quietness," is doubtless an integral part of the gift of peace, but it is not the only—it is not the whole or the chief part of it. The soul must be resting in its true object, or the tumult within will continue in the region of thought—in the region of affection—in the region of will—in the region of conscience.

"Peace be unto you." The crucifixion of our Lord had thrown His disciples into the greatest mental perplexity. They had trusted that it should have been He that would redeem Israel. They had believed that God, remembering His mercy, had holpen His servant Israel, as He had promised unto their forefathers, by sending His Son. They had followed the career of the prophet of Nazareth, with their eye upon the prophecies to which He constantly appealed ; and although they had been often unappreciative, or even self-willed,—although they had mistaken earthly images for heavenly realities, and a kingdom of sense for the kingdom which stretches far away beyond the senses, but is not, therefore, the less real, yet, on the whole, they had gone on getting their thoughts about him into some sort of order and preparing for a future which seemed to be at once imminent and glorious. Upon this state of mind the arrest, the crucifixion, the burial, of their Master, came like a thunderbolt. True, He had foretold it. True, prophecy had foretold it. But then the human mind has a strange way of closing its ear to the unwelcome or to the half-comprehended. To the disciples it seemed as if a dense impenetrable gloom had settled down upon all their hopes, or, rather, as if their thoughts about their Master had been thrown into irremediable confusion. This was their mental condition when He came through the closed doors, saying, "Peace be unto you." His words describe what would be the intellectual effect of His near appearance. The sight of Jesus Christ, risen from His grave, restored order into that world of thought. The crucifixion then was no longer the ruin of their faith if it was followed by the resurrection ; and here was the risen One Himself. The prophecies, after all, were consistent. There was no longer an apparent contradiction between the word of God and the verdict of experience. This is still the work of Jesus in the world. When He appears to souls in His glory He brings with Him intellectual peace. Without Him the belief in a holy God is embarrassed—and especially in the most modern world of thought—is embarrassed by the gravest perplexities. Here is the world said to be presided over by an all-good, all-powerful being—the world full of suffering, and without any certain prospect of alleviation—the world, worse still, full of sin and without any appearance of a remedy. Why are we here ? Whither are we going ? What is the destiny of the beings around us ? These are inquiries which what is called a "moral theism" suggests, but which it cannot answer. All the great haunting questions about life and destiny are unanswered

to any real purpose in the world of thought until Jesus, our Lord, God and man, our Redeemer in this world and for the next, appears. He brings with Him intellectual peace. It has, indeed, sometimes been supposed that a Christian knows no mental peace but the peace of mental stagnation, and that to be what is oddly called a "thinker" a man must needs be first a sceptic. It is, of course, true that a Christian is not free to be for ever opening questions which he believes to have been settled on the authority of God; and it may, therefore, be conceded that a sceptic considers a large number of questions to be fairly debatable than a Christian does. But here is all the admission on the subject that need be made. To believe in our Lord is not to condemn thought to inertness and stagnation. A man, I apprehend, does not do less work at mathematics because he starts with holding the axioms to be beyond discussion. On the contrary, a fixed creed, like that of the Christian, imparts to life and to nature such varied interest that, as experience shows, it fertilises thought; and the human intelligence has been, on the whole, more largely cultivated among the Christian peoples and in the Christian countries than before or elsewhere. Look at a mind like that of Pascal. His thought is not less active in all directions because he believes with all his heart that God has spoken and that His word is sure. His serenity of soul, on the other hand, is not less assured because in all directions he is for ever inquiring, learning, comparing, analysing, inferring, objecting, considering objections, concluding. For him the great eternal certainties do not change.

"Peace be unto you." The disciples had lost for the moment, by the death of Jesus Christ, the object of their affection. How much they already loved our Lord they did not know until He was removed. Now that He was, as they thought, in His grave, they felt what He had been to them: they felt the void—the weary restless void—of an aching heart. When, then, Jesus appeared He brought peace to their hearts. The wasting fever of unsatisfied affection no longer kept them in continuous restlessness. He appeared, and "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth, and will not let Him go," was the feeling of each disciple. That feeling in itself meant peace. Who does not know how largely the peace of the soul depends on the due employment of the affections? Mental satisfaction alone does not bring peace, for the heart remains unsatisfied; and that which satisfies the heart is beauty—that uncreated and eternal beauty of which all earthly beauty is but the shadow. It is an instinctive perception of this which makes so many people marry early. They hope to find in family life the satisfaction of their affections and the peace which that satisfaction brings; and, so far as anything earthly can satisfy a longing which is made for eternity, family life under favourable circumstances does give them what they want—gives it them in its measure and for a time. Sooner or later, trouble and death make sad havoc of peace like this. Only one being satisfies the affections in such a sort that the soul's peace is insured beyond risk of forfeiture. In Him we find that we can love perfectly, perseveringly, without risk of disappointment. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

"Peace be unto you." A third effect of the crucifixion had been that it had put out all the plans for action and for life which had been formed by the Apostles. They had gradually been learning to look forward to the establishment of a new kingdom upon earth, and to their own places in it, and to their work for it. All these visions of the future seemed to have vanished beyond recall. The Apostles were like men who have failed in business. For the moment the sky is overcast: there is nothing to be done—nothing to be hoped for. All seems despair: and the will—that stubborn and energetic faculty of the soul—the will, suddenly set free from the tension of continuous effort, falls back upon itself, and becomes a principle of inward disturbance. No men, I apprehend, know less of peace than the unoccupied. One of the secrets of peace is work. When our Lord, then, appeared with His "Peace be unto you," He uttered the words because He restored to the disciples that sort of peace which comes of occupation pursued under a sense of duty. They had been a prey to all the miseries of hopeless inaction. In seeing Him they saw a career

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again open itself before them. They knew now that He was alive,—that his kingdom was still a reality, or, rather, more a reality than ever before, and that in it they had each an assigned task in the performance of which their peace of soul would be insured. There are numbers of persons in London who do not know what peace is, mainly because they have not enough, or rather, anything serious to do. They do not know how to get through the day—much less the week. They may have money, friends, amusements, at hand. These things do not secure peace for the soul ; and many a working man who does not know how to get into the day what he has to do supposes that the condition of these idle people is a thing somehow to be envied. No mistake can possibly be greater. Depend on it, work guarantees the peace of the soul, because the soul, being what it is, must be active in some way, and work secures healthy action. The man who has no regular occupation has his mind and heart full of restless impracticable morbid thoughts and feelings which are fatal to peace. “The happiest days of my life”—they were the words of one of the wisest of men—“have been those in which I have had most to do, with fair health and strength to do it.”

“Peace be unto you.” How far as yet the Apostles understood in detail how their Master would reconcile them to God it is difficult to say ; but they knew that this was in some way to be a main effect of His mission and life and death. They knew from the law under which they had been educated that they were sinful, and that God was “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” In His last conversation our Lord had encouraged them to come to the Father by Him. He had before spoken of giving His life a ransom for many. At the institution of His great sacrament He had said, “This My blood is shed for you.” But if He had fallen under the violence of His enemies this redemption was a mere matter of phrase and conjecture. His life was essential to the completeness of His work. As for the disciples, they had for a while lost sight of Him. They knew not whether they were saved after all. They had lost that peace which comes from a sense of communion with God. When, then, our Lord came with His “Peace be unto you,” He restored peace because He restored the sense—however indefinite as yet before Pentecost it was—of pardon for past sin and reconciliation with God. Without this there can be no true peace for the soul of man. The heart left to itself “knoweth its own bitterness.” All have sinned, and the wicked are like a troubled sea. Only in communion with the perfect moral being—with Jesus who reconciles to God—can the soul find that peace which a sense of being pardoned brings. Perhaps no Christian since the days of the Apostles has illustrated the true peace of soul which Jesus Christ gives at Easter so fully as the great Augustine. Read that pathetic story of his early life which he gives in his “Confessions.” What a restless life it was before his conversion—the intellect tossed on the waves of speculation, without solid hold on any one reassuring truth ; the heart distracted between the ideals presented by a false philosophy and the ideals suggested by mere sensuality ; the will unable to fasten on any serious duty ; the conscience profoundly stirred by the terrible conviction that the son of peace was not there, alternating between the phase of brute insensibility and the phase of bitter agony. Then came his conversion. Jesus rose upon his soul, and what a change ! Peace in his intellect which now surveys with a majestic tranquillity the vast realms of revelation and of nature, more penetratingly, more comprehensively, than any Christian before had done since St. Paul. Peace in his heart which now turns its undisturbed and enraptured gaze upon the eternal beauty. As he says himself, “All is ancient, yet all is young.” Peace in his will, for which the problem of duty had been simplified. He knows what he has to do, and during the remaining years he does it—does it with all his might. Peace in his conscience : there is no longer any sense of an inward feud between himself and the law of absolute holiness. All has been pardoned through the cleansing blood. All is possible through the grace of the Redeemer.

Brethren, do we know anything of this inward peace—this peace of mind, of heart, of will, of conscience ? Let us not mistake it for some false peace—mere brute insensibility of soul which will only last so long as earth lasts,—which

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will desert us in the closing scenes, at latest. We need a peace which the world cannot give. We need this prerogative gift of Jesus Christ—His crowning Easter blessing. We have seen it, it may be, in others. We cannot analyse it. It pervades their life: it plainly keeps their hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. In itself, we know, it passes understanding. Its presence is traceable in the quiet resolve which is never disturbed by the ever-varying circumstances of the passing years,—in the well-compacted harmony of the faculties,—in the undertone of thankfulness and praise which is proof against the tragical possibilities of the days to come. This peace is no more touched by the troubles of life than the depths of the ocean are reached by the storm which sweeps its surface. This peace is an inalienable possession—inalienable excepting by the act of the man who possesses and who may forfeit it. Let us pray God, if in His mercy He has given it to us, that we may by His grace keep it to the end,—if He has, as yet, for our sins withheld it, that He will at once, for His blessed Son's sake, give us what we so greatly need, and in His good time let His servant depart in peace, to be with Him for ever.

THE BONES OF ELISHA; OR THE POWER OF THE PAST.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 30TH, 1876.

"And Elisha died and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet."—2 KINGS xiii. 20, 21.

THIS passage occurs in the proper lesson for Easter Tuesday, and we can see at a glance that it is intended to give a turn to our thoughts in harmony with the Easter season, but how it is to do this will, perhaps, be better understood if we begin by fixing our attention on the words which are before us, and on the event which they describe. Elisha, the disciple and successor of Elijah, was in many ways unlike him. Elijah was a child of the desert, resembling in his appearance the wild Bedouin Arabs, shunning the haunts of civilised men, clad in a rough mantle, with dishevelled locks, and a wild impetuous manner. Elisha was an inhabitant of cities—of Jericho, of Samaria, of Dothan. He was the guest of the Shunammite lady, the guest of the college of the prophets, the guest of the King of Israel. His dress and appearance were those of an ordinary Israelite. His hair was trimmed in the usual manner. He used a staff, as was usual with Israelites in advanced years. His ways were those of cultivated men in that age. Elijah's work was to destroy idolatry and all who upheld it. Elisha's work was to build up rather than destroy: it was to heal the wounds of Israel. Elijah was chiefly a preacher of righteousness who worked miracles occasionally in order to enforce his lessons. He was what Samuel had been before him. Elisha was, before all things else, a worker of miracles. His miracles occupy a much more important place in the Bible record about him than his teaching. Elijah ascended by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha is buried in the usual way, but his grave is the scene of miracle. Elijah is the type of John the Baptist. In his mode of life, in his spiritual temper, in the scope and purpose of his mission, he resembles our

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Lord's great forerunner. Elisha is the type of our Lord Himself. Like Jesus Christ, he came eating and drinking. Like Jesus Christ, his miracles were generally beneficent. They were sometimes, as with the children at Bethel, stern judgments. Like our Lord's, his loving gentle temper made him the friend of all classes—of king, of generals, of widows, of poor prophets. These came to him with their troubles for support and for advice. Like our Lord, though of course in a very different way, he did not lose his power when he died. As the son of Sirac says of him, "Whilst he lived he was not moved by the presence of any prince, neither could any bring him into subjection; no word could overcome him, and after his death his body prophesied. He did wonders in his life, and at his death his works were marvellous." The miracle which occurred at the tomb of Elisha connects him, especially as a type of Jesus Christ, with the glories of the holy sepulchre. If he did not rise from death, God put on him such high honour that, being dead, he quickened the dead to life.

The circumstances of the miracle are these. Elisha—so the Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us—had had a magnificent funeral. He had been buried, no doubt, in the usual Jewish fashion, in a cave or cell excavated on the side of a perpendicular rock, the opening of which would have been closed by a heavy stone. Some time after his death another funeral was being conducted hard by, when the mourners saw in the distance a band of armed Moabites. The Moabites now had had time to recover from their great defeat by Jehoram and Jehoshaphat. They had spread themselves over the districts north of the river Arnon, and every year, just when the spring crops were ripe, their hordes poured over the fields of Samaria on their errand of violence and plunder. It was one of these bands of spoilers which was observed in the distance by the mourners who were burying a man somewhere near the tomb of Elisha. They wished to put the corpse for safety into the nearest hiding place before the Moabites were upon them. It may have been accident—it may have been design—which led them to choose the tomb of Elisha: it may have been the depth and spaciousness of the cave: it may have been the prophet's reputation for sanctity. So, as the original text says, "they thrust the man into the sepulchre." The Jews, as you know, would have made no use of coffins. At the end of the cave there lay the bones of Elisha, wrapped up in the bandages which had enveloped his corpse. And then, we are told, when the man came and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

There is, my brethren, no other miracle in holy scripture which is exactly like this; and it certainly is much more striking—if I may reverently use such a word as that—than any of the miracles which were performed by Elisha during his lifetime. Certain it is that it produced great effect upon the Jews. They held this posthumous miracle to be Elisha's chief title to distinction among the prophets. After his death, his body prophesied or taught. That, in the Jewish schools, was his crowning glory. And the question may be asked why such a distinction should have been conferred upon him.

And here, brethren, remark that it is no reason against the truth of a miracle that we men are unable to discover any adequate reason for its having been worked. This, indeed, has been maintained, though surely, unadvisedly, by a respectable writer. The mistake lies in supposing that all the reasons for a given occurrence, which are obvious to the infinite intelligence of God, must be obvious to you and me. Now, not to travel over the limits of scripture, there are miracles, such as Elisha's causing the iron to swim, for which it is very difficult to suggest an adequate motive; but this difficulty will not weigh with any humble and reverent Christian who does not already consider himself to be a sort of private secretary to the Master of the universe. He will prudently remember that God may have reasons for the miracle which, it is not very wonderful, do not occur to himself. And yet we may trace a particular motive for the miracle which God worked through the bones of Elisha. In the depressed condition of Israel, Elisha's prophecies of victory over Syria were the

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main support of the hopes which fostered religious and national life ; but Elisha's voice had been silenced in death. Syria was as threatening as ever, and, if Elisha's authority did not decline, his sayings were, at any rate, likely to be forgotten. A miracle performed at his grave, like that described in the text, would have the effect—we know it had the effect—of drawing the eyes of his countrymen to their departed adviser. It would assure them that his words were still living,—that he had had power with God. It would convince them that his warnings, his encouragements, his promises, had not died away with his dying breath, when God put such signal honour upon him as the organ of His own mind and will.

It is not to be denied that miracles like this are regarded, in our day, with particular disfavour ; I might almost say, with repugnance. People, we are told, cannot enter into the quickening of a man by the bones of a dead prophet. They do not, they tell us, object to a miracle which follows from the acts or words of a living agent ; they cannot understand a miracle which is worked by contact with a material object in which some virtue seems to be supposed to reside.

Now as to its principle, let us observe that this miracle stands by no means alone in holy scripture. Akin to it, though not similar to it, is that which was wrought on the woman with the issue of blood. She touched the hem of our Lord's garment, and virtue went out of Him and healed her. And in the same way St. Peter's shadow is said in the Acts of the Apostles to have had a healing power : and cures were worked by handkerchiefs and aprons brought to the sick from the body of St. Paul. These New Testament miracles may indeed be explained by the mystery of the Divine incarnation. Christ is the life incarnate. Life and health flow forth from Him as from a primal source, and those who were around Him were allowed some small share—partial and faint though it was—in their Master's glory. In Elisha's case, the miracle cannot, of course, have been an effect—it might have been an acted prediction—of Christ's incarnate power. But, in point of fact, the objection to such miracles may be met on very intelligible grounds ; for the question really is, in the case of every miracle, who is the real agent ? Is it the living prophet or apostle who performs the act or who utters the word ? Surely not. The real agent is always almighty God. The prophet or apostle only asks God to act. It is God Who heals the sick,—God Who raises the dead ; and God makes use of a human hand, or of a human voice, to mark the time and the place at which He wills to do it. But, then, God is not so dependent upon a living human agent to give effect to His will. He can act through inert matter just as well, if He chooses to do so ; and when He does it is not any quality permanently resident in such matter that works : it is only, and always, Himself—the all-wise, the almighty God.

And this enables us to see our way through what I must think a shallow objection to the teaching of the Church catechism about Christian baptism. The Church catechism, as you know, says that in baptism a child is made “ a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” whereupon a great many people exclaim, “ How impossible ! How irrational it is to suppose that a little water in a font, sprinkled on a child by a clergyman who uses certain words, can produce a spiritual change like that.” Of course, my brethren, such a supposition would be irrational—would be impossible ; but then it is only a supposition, and it is not the doctrine of the Church. There is no permanent virtue lodged in the water. Matter, of itself, cannot possibly change the qualities of spirit ; but behind the water, behind the words, behind the clergyman, there stands almighty God, the real baptiser. These outward things are but the covenant signs of His approach—of His regenerating activity. The work is His. The water left to itself is just as powerless to convey spiritual life as were the bones of the prophet to give physical life ; but, when one or the other is taken into the almighty Hand, each may become the medium of power. Whatsoever is done upon earth He doeth it Himself.

But this miracle, like other miracles and providences of God, is as a lesson written in characters which all may read—written in action. Action may be

language, or, rather, it may be more eloquent than language. A parable may be acted as well as spoken, or better. And such an acted parable is this raising of the dead man at the tomb of Elisha ; for it teaches us a lesson which we are all apt to forget—the power—the quickening, invigorating power—of the past. Elisha, you will remember, was dead and buried. His body lay in the cell where they had placed it long before. The world pursued its course. Elisha seemed to be so far removed from its interests as if he had been dead for many a century. The king and the people of Israel were as godless as they had ever been ; the Syrians were as violent and as oppressive as they had been before. Only Elisha was not there to exhort and rebuke the one, and to keep the other at bay. The dead, my brethren, are soon forgotten. The sympathies, the regrets—the sincere and insincere regrets—which surround the grave are like the ripples which spread from a pebble that has sunk into the water ; as they widen they become fainter and fainter, and presently they die utterly away. Elisha's death, no doubt, at the time had created what we call “a sensation,” but now that he was buried all was over. Elisha was thought of as lost utterly to the world. He was among them that are wounded and lie in the grave, who are out of remembrance. He was with the great dead,—with David, with Samuel, with Moses, with the patriarchs. He had passed that line—that dark, sharp line—which, in this world of sense, severs the present from the past.

Brethren, as our thoughts rest upon the things of time they necessarily belong to the present, or to the future, or to the past. The present interests us all. It altogether absorbs hundreds of thousands. It seems to be at once so transitory and so urgent, so full of claims upon all the heart and thought that can be given it, that nothing, or almost nothing, remains. “Seize the gifts of the present hour with a glad heart ; let the stern problems of the future take care of themselves :” so whispered the Epicurean poet nineteen centuries ago. “Take no thought for the morrow :” so said our Lord, meaning “Trust yourselves to the fatherly providence of God.” “Take no thought for the morrow,” echoes Satan, meaning “Forget that there is a future—an endless future. Bury thought, bury conscience, in the grave of sense and time.” Those who live in the present forget alike the future and the past. One such has said, “Of the future I know nothing, and the past I cannot help. I will make the most of the pulses of life as, moment by moment, I feel them beat. All else is beyond me.” Less unreasonable than these men of the present are the men of the future. They certainly understand some of the dignity and scope of human existence. “It is folly,” they say, “to live only in the present. The present is dying ; the present escapes us as we attempt to seize it. The present is beyond our capacity to mould or improve. But the future—it is ours if we choose to make it so. The future is the field for improvement, for progress. Let us look forward : let us, with the Apostle, though not in his way or sense, forget those things that are behind, and stretch forward to those things that are before. Let us try, as best we can, to make the world better, wiser, happier, than it is.” My brethren, these aspirations, if rightly understood, are profoundly Christian, A Christian, too, lives for the future—for that eternal future whose horizons are never quite beyond his range of sight. He is especially a man of progress—of that true progress which deals with man—with himself and others—as beings who belong already to another and a higher world. But when men nowadays speak of looking forward, they generally have an earthly future only in view—a future, if not only for the individual, yet only for the race—a future which is to be strictly bounded by the limits of sense—a future, it may be, of improved secular education, of lighter taxes, of widely diffused comforts, of the diminution of class privileges, of general physical and social well being, and nothing beyond. On one point the men of the future of this description agree with the men of the present, they both have a genuine contempt for the past. “The past,” they think—“oh it is dead and gone.” It has nothing to teach them,—nothing to impart to them in the way of vigour and of life. The past—it belongs to libraries and bookworms ; it belongs to graves and sextons ; it belongs to ruins and to antiquaries. It has no claims on the living, working, thinking men who are moving the world. The past—it is rotten, they say, in the grave

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to which the centuries have consigned it ; and to meddle with its sepulchre, so they suggest in a whisper, is prejudicial to the public health. "Let it alone ; let it alone," say they, "in its carnal house. This is the rightful portion of the moles and of the bats. It is dead beyond recall ; and from its fetid bones you can draw neither light nor force, neither hope nor inspiration."

Certainly, brethren, the past is not all of it instructive or vivifying. Every tomb, I fully grant, does not contain the bones of an Elisha, but, depend upon it, there is that in the past which has power to quicken the present. It may be out of sight ; it may have perished from the memories of men ; but it only waits the time when the languid wills, the cold hearts, the dying or the dead convictions of the present, shall touch it, and by it be reinvigorated with life.

See how this is the case with nations. To a nation a great past is an integral element of its life, so powerful, so precious, that wise patriots and rulers do all they can to preserve it. They cherish its archives and its early histories ; and sitting where you do you can observe that they erect statues to its great statesmen, its great warriors, its great writers, its great philanthropists. They take care of these ancient public buildings. They encourage all that keeps national virtues or national triumphs alive in the public mind. They celebrate anniversaries and centenaries : they make most of occasions that enshrine the great memories of the past. If thoughtful Americans visit this country, or the other countries of Europe, what do they envy us ? Not our fleets, not our commerce, not our great cities, not our free press and free political life, not our vigorous social struggles. In these things they are our rivals : they may easily become our superiors. They envy us that which they do not possess in any degree worth mentioning—a national past. They envy us our old institutions, our old buildings, our old seats of learning, our traditions which span the middle ages and the times before them, our history of fifteen hundred years. We English are apt to think little enough of these things, but they cannot be created by energy ; they cannot be bought with money : they are the growth of ages ; they are the gift of God. The American people will be a century old next July, and a century does not go far towards accumulating the treasures of an historical past. In a century there is, as yet, scarcely room for the grave of Elisha. What does the past do for a nation ? It kindles a nation when depressed by misfortune, or degenerated through luxury, into a new life. A great defeat, or a great failure, or a sensible decline in all that gives a nation moral vigour and self-respect, leads it, or leads its leading minds, to consider what their ancestors were,—what were the characters, the sacrifices, the actions, by which their own declining greatness was originally won. A degenerate posterity asks itself why, with the same blood flowing in its veins, it should be incapable of the virtues of those who have gone before it. The corpse of national life, the languid pulse of national thought, are thus brought into contact with the past. They touch the bones of Elisha : the country may yet revive and stand again on its feet.

One great nation, indeed, has seriously tried to dispense altogether with the past. In the first French revolution an attempt was made to destroy all the traces of fourteen centuries. The old buildings were pulled down ; the old institutions were proscribed ; the old literature was largely burned or put upon the shelf ; even the old names for the divisions of time were banished from the public and private life. It seemed, eighty years ago, as if the France of St. Louis had perished for ever,—as if a new people had arisen out of the soil, which owed nothing except hatred to the traditions of its ancestry. It could not be so. Nature and Providence were not thus to be set at defiance. One by one, even before that revolution had spent its force, the old names and habits and traditions of France resumed their empire. The past could not be expelled by force, except for a moment. The generation which had applauded Robespierre lived to be ecstatic about Chateaubriand.

Observe the bearing of this principle on the history of churches. To a church the past is even more than it is to a nation, since its title-deeds have

been given it once for all, and it has had everything in the first age of its existence that it can possibly have now. The sacred scriptures—how largely are they, both in the Old and the New Testaments, records of the past. The great saints and heroes of the church—they have lived in the past. Its legislation, its literature, its greatest missionary triumphs, its philanthropic efforts, struck their roots into the past—into ages of strong clear faith—ages of earnest practical zeal. Its test of truth is that which was always, everywhere, received by all. In practice and in thought it must endeavour to stand on the old paths. The alternative is ruin. Do I say that a Christian church has no duties to the present,—no hopes and aspirations for the future? Far from it. It lives, works, breathes in the one : it has the promise, the certain promise, of the other. But the past is, so to say, its capital. Its business is to call to mind God's wonders of old time ; not to hide them from the children of the generations to come, but to show the honour of the Lord—His mighty and wondrous works that He hath done. Churches, particular churches, like nations, have their days of glory—their days, too, of depression and of shame. To the collective Church of Christ alone is the promise given that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In portions of the East and in Northern Africa, there were once flourishing Christian churches which have now ceased to exist. And many a church which has not died outright has experienced decline of faith, and love, and zeal, and reverence, and all that makes it what it should be before God and humanity. The history of Christendom is full of these declensions in which some corrupt spirits, such as lukewarmness, or misbelief, or irreverence, or worldliness, have possessed themselves of a portion of the Church, and dimmed its eye and chilled its heart. This was the case in most of the churches of Europe before the Reformation : this has been conspicuously the case wherever in later times a false pietism has undermined reverence for Christian antiquity, and so has made way for pure unbelief. The upgrowth of an ecclesiastical tyranny, or the iron grasp of a secular government, may be equally fatal to that buoyancy of faith, to that freedom of soul, to that sense of the unseen and the eternal, to that grasp of the supernatural, to that moral sensitiveness, to that energy and productiveness in all that leads to heaven and that is for the highest good of man, which is the essential life of a true Christian church. If a church is stricken with the languor of death it must be quickened in the old way—by contact—new and earnest contact—under the guidance of the Spirit, with the sacred past.

We may have heard, perhaps, of such churches—of such a church which public opinion was already, some five and forty years ago, preparing for burial, while a band of Moabitish spoilers was seen hovering, not indistinctly, in the distance, ready to swoop down upon the prey. Then by God's good providence it was thrust by loving and courageous hands into the grave of Elisha. It was confronted sharply with its own past—the past of Christendom. The real sense of Christianity, the majesty and pathos of the apostolic ages, the great teachers later on who ruled the thought of the undivided Church—Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, Athanasius—and who towered so high above the lesser stature of any in our impoverished and divided Christendom—these were for such a church as the bones of Elisha. Out of that glorious past which, though it lies in its tomb in our libraries and our museums, is, we know, imperishable, there was a power of life to stream forth into the intellect and heart and conscience of a church which indifference, or irreverence, or misbelief, or half belief, had so seriously enfeebled. It learnt to believe in its mission from heaven, in its Divine origin, in its glorious destinies ; it learnt real faith in the cleansing blood, in the power of the present Spirit, in the power of the sacraments. Our Lord became again to it what He was to His Apostle, walking amid the golden candlesticks. Into the ear of such a church He had whispered His Easter greeting in the Canticles—" Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away ; for the winter is past ; the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear upon the earth ; the time of the singing of the birds is come. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away "

Observe the application of this principle to the Christian soul. Every Christian soul has its past, its sacred memories known only to itself and to God. Like St. Paul, perhaps, it has at one time or another heard unspeakable things which it is not lawful for a man to utter. It has been close to God—possessed of His secrets,—instinct with His life. It has had its own invisible friends, its own hopes and fears, its own horizons on earth and in heaven. These things, my brethren, are not transferable. But, besides these, it has had that devotion to our Divine Redeemer, Jesus, God and man, Who gave His life for each and for all of us—that sense of the present energy of His Spirit—that value and reverence for His means of grace which are characteristic of a Christian. And, above all, the moral results of the Christian life—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—these, too, it has fostered in its garden, for the Holy Spirit has been there, and it is He who gives the increase of such flowers and fruits as these. But, like nations and churches, souls, too, have their period of depression—their epochs of growth and decline. There is no such thing as indefectible grace. We may forfeit God's grace, partly or wholly ; and it is a mistake to think that we, all of us, necessarily, as we get older, grow better. Many of us really do get worse. Times of darkness, of deadness, of spiritual blindness, come even to tried and faithful servants of Christ. They no longer believe, hope, love, as they did once. They no longer pray as they prayed once. Conscience is left to take care of itself in a way which would have been impossible years ago. God, the Holy Trinity, in His awful and blessed life,—Jesus, our Lord, God and man,—the loving and inspiring Spirit,—the written word of God,—the home of souls, the church—the sacraments, the means of grace, the hope of heaven, the fear of hell—these things are no longer what they used to be to the soul. A deadness, it in plain—a deadness has come over it. Phrases have taken the place of convictions. The eternal realities have been somehow displaced in its affections by the things of time. That soul is in a fair way to die outright. It is carried out to be buried by the spirit of the world—by the force of circumstances ; and then some danger, some illness, some heart-ache which convulses the depths of being, leads it to seek retreat. The Moabites are in sight, and it is thrust into the tomb of Elisha : it is brought into contact with its own buried past,—with the years of old which have been as forgotten as if they had never been,—with the thoughts that had been uppermost—with the friends who have long since passed into another world. All that early time which seemed to have perished so utterly is there buried away in the tomb of memory ; and the discovery of an old letter, or a visit to an early home, or a conversation with a friend who has not been heard of for years, may awaken it, as by a touch of the bones of Elisha.

“Thou unrelenting past !
Strong are the barriers round thy dark domain ;
And fetters sure and fast
Hold all that enter thy unbreathing reign.

Thou hast my better years ;
Thou hast my earlier friends ; the good, the kind,
Yielded to thee with tears—
The venerable form, the exalted mind.

Thine for a space are they ;
Yet shalt thou yield thy treasures up at last ;
Thy gates shall yet give way,
Thy bolts shall fail, inexorable past !”

Oh, wonderful awakening, in which what seemed to have perished is again before us—in which we again become, in some measure, what we were—in which the dead speak to us as if they were yet living—in which the ideas, the resolutions, the hopes, the habits, of thirty years before, resume their sway as with a life from the dead ! This memory of the days of old and of the years

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that are past may be—often is—nothing less than the very crisis of destiny—a true spiritual rising from the dead.

Brethren, let us turn our eyes towards the future—the future of our country, the future of our church and of Christendom,—the future—the eternal future—of our immortal souls. But do not let us forget the past. The past has a great place in God's government of the world—in God's teaching of His Church, in God's guidance of the soul. True, the past teaches us sometimes by warning, sometimes by encouragement; but it is full of lessons, full of power, full of inspiration, for the past belongs to God, no less than the present and the future. For God, the eternal mind is no succession—neither present, nor future, nor past. For us the past is so precious because God does not change. He will be what He has been—what He is. It is He Who quickens through the bones of Elisha : it is His thought, His grace, His beauty, by which all that is great in the past of humanity, or in the past of Christendom, or in the history of the soul, is really formed. In seeking it we seek Him ; and, as we thus feel more and more sincerely that He has been “our help in ages past,” we are quickened by the conviction that He will be “our help,” too, in “years to come,”

“ Our refuge from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.”

THE ADEQUACY OF PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 18TH, 1876.

"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—LUKE xvi. 31.

ON this the first of the long line of Sundays after Trinity, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus opens the lessons on Christian duty which are set before us in the successive Gospels, with a force and a pathos which we feel from our early childhood—at least, if I may trust my own experience. The three vivid contrasts of this parable are among the very first features in the Gospel to take possession of the imagination and the heart.

First, there is the contrast between the rich and the poor—that great contrast which is apparently rooted in the nature of things, which reappears in all ages and countries wherever there is a settled order of human society. Dives, with his outer robe of purple wool and with his under tunic of fine linen—Dives, with his table furnished day after day with every delicacy that money can buy—he is always here. And Lazarus, thrown down—such is the original expression—thrown down, to lie at the gate of the outer court of the rich man's mansion—Lazarus who feeds upon the crumbs which the slaves of Dives, half contemptuously, throw to him—Lazarus so unclothed that his very wounds are without bandages, and the dogs that roam through the streets of the eastern city stop for a moment as they pass to lick his sores—he, too, is always here; a contrast, I say, as old and as lasting as society, a contrast which met the eye centuries ago in Rome and in Jerusalem, just as it meets them when we walk from the east to the west end of London; a contrast, it must be added, which social science and wise legislation and, above all, the Divine charities of Jesus Christ our Lord, filling the regenerated hearts of men make less harsh, less shocking, but the cause of which they cannot really remove.

And there is a second contrast—that of the living and the dead. The parable places us face to face with Dives and Lazarus, first in life, and then in the world which follows. This is a more solemn contrast than that between the rich and the poor. It is a contrast between that which passes and that which

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lasts—between appearance and reality. Lazarus—so we are told—dies in time worn out, no doubt, by want and sickness. Nothing is said of his burial: perhaps he was not buried at all. And after a while Dives dies too, and of course is buried—buried with all due respect and ceremony. And after the brief sleep of death they wake, as we shall all one day wake, in a new world. The life of that world is a continuation of the life of this. Circumstances are altered: characters remain. Enough now to repeat that what we see here is the apparent: what we shall see there is the real. And this contrast between the living and the dead is much more rooted in the nature of things than that between the rich and the poor. It is as old, it is as wide, it is as enduring, as the human race. Day by day men and women around us are exploring it: day by day they are passing the line which separates the living and the dead, and sounding the heights and depths of its stern, of its blessed, significance.

And the parable brings before us a third contrast, differing from the two former in this—that whereas they belong, the first wholly, and the second in part, in this present world, this third is altogether concerned with the next. In the next world there are two companies of beings, the miserable and the blessed. All are not blessed: numbers, thank God, are certainly not miserable. There Lazarus rests in the bosom of Abraham: there Dives lifts up his eyes being in torment. And between the two there is a great gulf fixed, “so that,” in Abraham’s words, “they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us which would come from thence.” A contrast, my brethren, yet more solemn than that between the living and the dead—a contrast which will still endure when all that now meets the eye of sense shall have passed away.

As we dwell on our Saviour’s words we are, perhaps, tempted to say to ourselves, “After all, it is only a parable.” Well, brethren, it is a parable, although it is, possibly, also a history. There is something, at any rate, to be said for the opinion that Dives and Lazarus were real persons with whose earthly circumstances our Lord’s bearers were acquainted, and whose destiny after death he authoritatively proclaims. But, however this may be, a parable, though it be a purely fictitious narrative, teaches something when it comes from the mouth of the Master of eternal truth. Its imagery, its rabbinical phraseology, its incidents—these all, each of them, do mean something. They may be translated into corresponding realities. And this parable, I submit, if it teaches anything at all, can certainly teach nothing less than these three contrasts—the contrast between the rich—the selfish rich—and the poor, the suffering poor; the contrast between the living and the dead; the contrast between the happy and the miserable in another world.

Now it is to the last of these three contrasts that our text belongs. Dives and Lazarus are now among the dead, not yet separated, as they will be after the final judgment, but separated, we are told by an impassable gulf. They are in that sphere of being into one district of which our Lord descended after His death, and which we call “hell” in the creed,—which contains, on the one hand, paradise and Abraham’s bosom—anticipations, these, of a perfect happiness to come; and while also contains that which is already the portion of Dives while he awaits the final judgment. Yet between Dives and Abraham, it would seem, some sort of communication is still possible; and in this report or representation of the Divine Teacher we have put before us two separate conversations.

First of all Dives petitions Abraham, as the father of all faithful Israelites, that a drop of water may be sent him by the hand of Lazarus; and Abraham tells his son—(mark the tragic irony of the expression)—that this cannot be, partly because an absolute justice is redressing the inequalities of that life on earth, and partly because there is a great gulf fixed: the divine award is irreversible. Then, since nothing can be done among the dead, Dives thinks of the living. Dives is ruined, as he now knows, not because he was rich, but because he abused his wealth. He has five brethren who are living as he once lived on earth. He thinks that if Lazarus could visit them, speaking of what happens beyond the grave, with the authority of experience, they would be changed

men. Abraham answers, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Dives remembers that he in his earthly days, had Moses and the prophets too, close at hand, and yet that he had died as he had lived: and so he pleads with Abraham that, if only a visitor from the realms of death should see them, these five brethren would really repent. And to this Abraham answers again that "if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Now, perhaps, if we were to say out what we really think—some of us—we should say that it seems to us, at first sight, almost hard in Abraham to answer Dives as he does answer him; for, after all, Dives was doing all that it was still possible for him to do. For himself, he was ruined—ruined irretrievably; but these five brethren—could nothing be done for them? If Lazarus might not cross the great gulf fixed, with a drop of water for the tongue of Dives, might he not visit the world of living men, to speak a word of warning to the rich man's five surviving brethren? No, Abraham will not allow that this demand is justified, for, if we translate the parable into the meaning which the Divine speaker and his hearers would alike put on it, what is this demand of Dives, virtually, but an indictment against God for not having furnished the rich Israelites of that day with sufficiently strong motives to holiness and amendment of life? The Jewish opponents of Jesus Christ our Lord were continually asking in this way for signs and wonders, and our Lord was constantly replying that there were proofs enough, and to spare, of his mission, in the law, in the prophets, in His own works, in His own words—proofs enough to dispense with anything of the kind. Dives talks still like the ordinary Pharisees of the day. When he asks that Lazarus may be sent to his brethren, he implies, you observe, that if he himself had been visited by one who had seen the realities of the other life he would have lived and died quite differently. As it was, he had only had the old book to fall back upon—only Moses and the prophets. There was something, he tacitly suggests,—there was something to be said for him, after all; and, therefore, when Abraham refers to the five brethren he means Dives himself as well. If Dives had not heard Moses and the prophets, neither would he have been persuaded though one had risen from the dead to warn him.

Now this answer to Dives is undoubtedly meant to represent the mind and judgment of our Lord Himself. Abraham in the parable declares the will of God, just as Dives puts into words the thoughts of the Pharisees of the day. Let us, then, consider this reply of Abraham somewhat more at length. What does it teach us?

It teaches us, first of all, how far the actual sight of a miracle would be likely to produce real faith in the unseen world. Dives let Lazarus lie at his gate. Why? Because he had no true belief in the unseen. The brethren of Dives would do their duty by such as Lazarus if they only could see, in all His perfections, Him Who is invisible—their present Master—their future Judge. Hundreds of men in our day, who have lost living faith in the religion of Jesus Christ our Lord, think that if they could only witness a miracle they could not help believing again—believing at once. "It is all very well," they say, "to read in the Gospels about the stilling the tempest, about feeding the five thousand, about the raising three persons from the dead, about the resurrection of the Lord Himself. More than eighteen centuries have passed since those events, and there are no miracles, it seems, now. Let us see a miracle" they say; "let us have it examined and approved by competent persons, and, depend upon it, it will not fail in its effect. People will then believe because they will not be able to help believing in the truth of the creed which the miracle is intended to attest." This, you observe, is exactly what Dives thought and said about the five brethren if Lazarus were allowed to appear before them. The apparition, he thought, must make them live for another life—that is to say, live by faith. Moses and the prophets, he implied, had lost their power: they were old books dealing with matters which had been said and done hundreds of years ago. They were books which Dives and his brethren had known from childhood, and familiarity had bred indifference,

or something worse. And men ask now, in the heart of Christendom, "Is there not something in this?" Is not that which appeals to sense more powerful with most of us than that which appeals to thought? Is not the present more moving than the past—a witnessed action than a written testimony or an abstract argument? Would not a dead man standing before our eyes, telling us that he had revived to come from the regions of the dead, with an appearance and other evidences that justified his assertion, have, of necessity, an influence upon us which a Bible read quietly in our church, or in our bedroom, or a Christian teacher listened to under accustomed circumstances, could never command? Would not a preternatural apparition exert over us a sway immediate, resistless, making us believers—earnest, clear-sighted, impartial believers—in spite of our very selves?" All these questions our Lord answers now, and for this answer the reasons are not hard to find. Miracles are called in the Bible, with reference to their effect upon the human mind, "signs and wonders." They excite astonishment: they call attention to the mission, or message of the worker. A miracle is intended, first of all, to startle the beholder: it is a wonder; and it is intended, next, to point towards the unseen and the eternal: it is a sign. But even if the sight of a miracle produces these effects—if it first startles the man, and next suggests that there is something which he does not see and which is worth his attention and belief—this does not amount to actual faith. It is one thing to be convinced of the truth of the unseen: it is another thing to be startled. At some time in our lives we must all of us have been startled by occurrences which, although unaccustomed, at least to us, could not be deemed miracles. A friend has died without any sort of warning. We have been in a railway accident in which several persons have lost their lives, and we have escaped—we know not how—through a series of unforeseen contingencies. Or some historical catastrophe, like the surrender of Sedan, or like the recent tragedies at Constantinople, has happened, and, for the moment, the world holds its breath, and seems to feel that God is passing along the corridors of human history. And events like these, on a small scale or a great, are intended to remind us that what we see and are is very insignificant, indeed, when compared with what we do not see and what we shall be. Events like these, though occurring in a strictly natural way, do, up to a certain point, the very proper work of miracles. They flash upon our minds for a moment the truth that God is, not now only, but always, near, with His eye upon us, guarding us, judging us in His perfect truth, His perfect love, His perfect justice.

Ah, these occurrences startle us, but what does it amount to? A momentary sensation; a mental, a moral spasm, which comes and goes and leaves us as we were, or, perhaps, religiously speaking, if it goes, not quite so well off as we were. Of course a shock of this kind, like St. Paul's great experience on the road to Damascus, may be our very door of entrance into the life of faith; but the shock of itself does not insure these consequences. Utter astonishment and bewilderment is one thing: faith in the unseen is another. A swift succession of several new phases of thought and feeling, produced by a grand catastrophe and compressed into a single minute, may be the turning point of an existence, or only a strange experience. No doubt the five brethren and Dives too in his earthly lifetime would have been startled by the appearance of Lazarus, fresh from the scenes beyond the grave; but this does not at all prove that they would have been endowed with that new and vivid perception of unseen things which we call faith.

For, secondly, a miracle is only likely to have real and lasting effect when it is addressed to a particular set of men. A sonata of Beethoven means nothing for a man who has no ear for music. A picture of Raphael is lost upon the observer who has no sense of colour, of proportion, of artistic beauty. And, in the same way, the mind of the man who witnesses a miracle must be predisposed in a certain way, or the miracle will altogether fail of its intended effect. The observer must, in the psalmist's words, have an eye to God, if he is to be lightened by the miracle. He must be already looking out for God—looking out for some token of the will of God. He believes, we will suppose,

in a vague way, that there is a maker and ruler of the world. He believes that there is an author of the law of right and wrong which he recognizes within himself. Now, depend upon it, the more he makes of this law of right and wrong, the more disposed he will be to make the most of what will be told him on authority about the Being who gave the law. In this state of mind he will watch anxiously for any sign that the Lord of nature may deign or seem to deign to make on the surface of nature, with a view to showing that He is also the Lord of conscience and the Lord of revelation. But if the man has no such interests, no such anticipations, to begin with, then the miracle says nothing to him: for him the miracle is a mere curious irregularity observable upon the surface of nature. It arrests his attention; perhaps, it excites his apprehension for a moment; but that is all. And if he has already made up his mind against the truth of which the miracle is the divine certificate, then the miracle must be powerless to move him. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." This was actually the case with those Jews to whom our Lord was speaking not long after. Moses and the prophets had foretold Him—the true Messiah. "Search the scriptures—your own scriptures" He had said, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." But Moses and the prophets had written in vain, as far as that generation of Israelites was concerned. "Their table"—as prophet and apostle had said—"their table was made a snare to take themselves withal: the things which should have been for their health were unto them an occasion of falling." Scripture had failed. Could miracle succeed? Jesus Christ died in public; He was buried; on the third day He rose from the dead. His resurrection was well-attested fact. Those who had known Him best saw Him singly—saw Him with others. He was seen again and again during the period of forty days. On one occasion He was seen by five hundred persons, half of whom were living some twenty-five years afterwards. But were the Jews as a people convinced? On the contrary, they set themselves at once to get rid of this stupendous miracle, intended though it was to convince them that He to Whom their whole history pointed had really come, by every explanation they could devise. The disciples, they said, had stolen the body. The disciples had conspired to palm off an imposture on the world. Our Lord might as well have remained in His grave as far as the great men in Jerusalem were concerned. They began, you see, by refusing to hear Moses and the prophets: they were not persuaded though He, their true King, had risen from the dead.

Remember this, brethren, when you are tempted to think that faith would have been easier in the days of the Apostles than it is now. "If a miracle could only be worked before my eyes," it is sometimes said, "I should have believed without difficulty." Would you? The probability is that the very temper of mind which makes you ask for the miracle would kill belief in the presence of the miracle. Miracles are intended to assist those who are already seeking God. They are not intended to inflict the sense of God's power and presence and truth on those who do not wish to know more about Him. A miracle cannot force a soul to believe: it does not act like a machine or like a chemical solvent, producing the specific effect whether men will or not. There are many ways of neutralising this proper effect; and if we have heard Moses and the prophets—if we have listened to Evangelists and Apostles, and to the Lord of life Himself, to no real or lasting purpose, we should not, of necessity, be persuaded though the floor of this abbey were this evening to break up beneath our feet, and the buried dead were to come forth to tell us that the world to come is an awful and overwhelming reality.

And, next, Abraham's reply to Dives teaches us how far circumstances can be presumed to determine conduct. What a miracle is to faith—that favourable circumstances are to duty. As a miracle makes faith easy, so favourable circumstances, good examples, encouraging friends, the urgency of great opportunities, the inheritance of a noble name—these make duty easy. But duty is no more necessarily forced upon us by circumstances than faith is

forced upon us by miracle. Yet if there are hundreds who say, "I should be a sincere believer in Christianity if I could only see a person who had come from the dead," there are thousands who say, "I should be a better woman or man than I am if only I were differently circumstanced,—if I were not tempted by poverty or tempted by wealth,—if I had religious and high-minded friends about me,—if I lived near a church, or knew a good clergyman,—if I had lived in other ages, the ages of faith, as they are called, when all the controversies that fill the air in modern times were quite unknown, and everybody was of one mind as to the best way of getting to heaven." My brethren, it is not the same thing to any one of us whether we have good friends or bad,—whether we have religious privileges at hand or are quite without them,—whether we can resort at will for counsel or comfort to the servants of Christ, or are debarred from doing so,—whether we are exposed to the temptations of luxury or to the temptations of want, or are blest with that amount of competency which saves us from these temptations. Circumstances are judgments or they are blessings, from God, and when He surrounds us with such circumstances as to make it easier for us to live for Him and to attain the true end of our existence, we have, indeed, great reason to bless Him for the blessings of this life, since, like all other good things, they come from Him the fountain of all goodness. But these blessings do not of themselves make a moral, religious, beneficent, Christian life necessary. They do not act upon us like the rain or the sunshine or the atmosphere act upon plants. Under favourable circumstances a plant cannot help growing. It obeys the law of its kind by an inevitable necessity. But under favourable circumstances—nay, under the most favourable that we can possibly conceive—a human soul can refuse to grow—can remain resolutely stunted, dwarfed, misshapen—can resist triumphantly, ay, to its final ruin, all the blessed influences that might draw it upwards and onwards, all that might purify, invigorate, transfigure, save it. Felix was not compelled to be a Christian by the Apostle's burning words about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, though he felt their awful force. Demas was not cured of his love of this present world by the sight and friendship of Christ's aged servant Paul, now in chains at Rome, and on the eve of his martyrdom. Nay, if circumstances were ever favourable—so we may well think—to the wellbeing and growth of any human soul, they were the circumstances of the unhappy Judas, blest as he was with the daily visible Divine companionship of the Saviour of the world. They did not arrest the commission of two tremendous crimes,—first, that of betraying the Most Holy into the hands of His enemies, and next of rushing by his own act, impenitent, into the presence of his Judge.

Certainly let us admit that if favourable circumstances do not force holiness upon us, they may and do often protect us against monstrous vice—against the outcome of passions and dispositions which, it may be, are still unsubdued within us, though kept more or less in check. When we read of a great crime how rarely does it occur to us to ask ourselves, with Augustine, whether, but for God's protection and grace, we too might not have been the criminal. We read in boyhood the histories, no doubt, of the early Roman Emperors—of Caligula, of Nero, of Domitian, of Commodus; and we said to ourselves that it was wonderful that men so lost to the better instincts of our common nature should have been permitted to cumber the high places of the earth. But should we have been better in their circumstances? With unlimited power of gratifying our own selfish instincts, and of making all others with whom we came into contact the slaves of our will,—without the fear of another world before our eyes, the fear of judgment, the fear of God,—without the light which streams—more or less of it—upon the most benighted consciences in Christendom from the radiant figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, should we have been better than they? Should we have been capable of unselfishness, or disinterestedness, or largeness of heart, or self-discipline, in that place of dizzy, awful elevation, with all the world at our feet,—with every incentive to indulge the whims and passions of self at the cost of others? Should we have been capable of the splendid natural virtues—I will not say of Antoninus or of

Marcus Aurelius, but even of Trajan—even of Adrian. In our Lord's day the Jews of Palestine used to compare themselves with their forefathers who had a hand in murdering the prophets. They said that had they been there they would not have killed the prophets. But He who knew what was in man saw them through and through. He knew that they would have done just what their fathers had done before them. He looked onwards a few months into the future: He knew what was coming: He saw the Jewish mob which would arrest Him in the garden: He heard the insults in the house of Caiaphas: He witnessed the long tragedy of the way of sorrows—the hours which He would spend on the cross of shame. "Fill ye up, therefore, the measure of your fathers. Do not criticise men whose conduct would have been—whose temper and principles were—exactly your own."

Yes, circumstances have an immense restraining power, but they have of themselves no active power to change the heart. Dives and his brethren knew that divine code, the tenderness and mercy of which for the suffering and the poor had been so fully drawn out by the great Jewish teacher, Nimonides. They were flooded with the light of God's moral law. Israel was the very home of the traditions of compassion and mercy that were to be found in the ancient world. Its higher conscience—this, as always, was on the side of the suffering and the poor. "Be merciful after thy power. If thou hast much, give plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little." "Give alms of thy goods and never turn thy face away from any poor man, and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee"—These were among its later utterances. The synagogue could name teachers famous for their tenderness, famous for their generosity and compassion; but Dives thought that these examples and motives were quite insufficient. We marvel at Dives; but, brethren, is it otherwise with ourselves? Do we not dwell on the difficulties of serving God in this as in other matters, and forget the grace, the light, the strength, the examples, the encouragements, which He has given us in the kingdom of His Son? What might not heathens have done with our measure of opportunity—with our measure of light? There were towns in Israel of old, the streets of which were trodden by the feet of the Saviour of the world, and He pronounced with His own blessed lips their condemnation on this very ground—because pagan cities with their advantages would have been very much more responsive to His presence and His words. "Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." No, it is something else than circumstances which makes us do God's will just as it is something else than miracle which makes us believe His word. Miracle and circumstances do their part. They assist the heart: they make the task of the will easier: they do not compel obedience. He who has made us free, respects our freedom even when we use it against Himself—even when we resist His own most gracious and gentle pressure and choose to disbelieve or to disobey Him. If Moses and the prophets are to persuade us—if we are not to be beyond persuasion, though one rose from the dead—there must be that inward seeking, yearning after God, that wholeness of heart, that tender and affectionate disposition towards Him Who is the end as He is the source of our existence, of which the Bible is so full from first to last—which is the very essence of religion—which He, its Object and its Author, gives most assuredly to all who ask Him.

My brethren, few of us it may be are exactly in the case of Dives. Probably at least nine-tenths of those who hear me have something to give if they will make an effort at self-denial in order to meet the claims of Lazarus. And to-day is a great occasion for discovering how far we are capable of persuasion by the love of God, by the claims of humanity, by the example and precepts of our Divine Lord and Saviour, to say nothing of Moses and the prophets. We have many of us, it may be, in our time, had before our minds visions of doing splendid deeds of benevolence,—visions which belonged not to our actual means or circumstances, but to those of others, or to a fancy world.

We have said to ourselves, "If I had the fortune of such and such a nobleman at my command, and if such and such a catastrophe were only to occur, how I should delight at laying out a hundred thousand pounds or half-a-million of money for the relief, the pure relief, of human suffering." Oh, admirable aspiration! But the worst of it is that the occasion and the means of meeting it are alike hypothetical; and this purely hypothetical benevolence is like a certain sort of novel, it taxes our sympathy without resulting in any real good either to our own characters or to other people. Do not let us wait to do what good we can till some one comes from the dead: do not let us wait till our circumstances change. Ere they change all may have ended with us in this life of probation. "Though one rose from the dead." A Lazarus has risen before now in history, not to persuade the selfish possessors of property to recognise their responsibilities towards human want and pain around them, but to judge. He has risen from the oppressions, from the neglect of a thousand years: he has risen, it may be, more than once in history amid scenes of blasphemy and violence and blood, but he has risen in the name of a forgotten justice to plead the cause which has been pleaded in vain by his open sore for ages, lying as he was at the gate of Dives. The spectre of a social revolution has been happily unknown in England—unknown for this among other reasons—that the duties of the wealthy towards the suffering classes have been—I dare not say adequately, but largely—recognised among us for a great number of years. But the immense disparities of our society—its masses, its increasing masses, of poverty—its vast accumulations of wealth—present a contrast which year by year may well cause, as it does cause—increasing anxiety; and this anxiety can only be lessened if those to whom God has given wealth and influence lose no opportunity at their disposal of supplying the wants and bettering the position of their poorer fellow countrymen.

Here is Hospital Sunday upon us—a great, a blessed occasion for the fruitful exercise of pure benevolence. All the common objections to charitable effort are silent here. The social and political economists do not warn us to-day that we demoralise the poor when we bring them the highest medical skill and knowledge as they lie on their bed of pain. The financiers do not suggest that our alms are spent partly or wholly on the way to the object for which we give them; and at the gates of the hospitals, these true temples of compassion, our controversies are silent. Those who know most of our Lord and Saviour—those who know less or least about Him—those even who do not own the empire of His ever blessed name—agree as to the urgency of His precept and His blessing, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Lazarus is close to us. Hundreds of thousands in this vast city have succeeded to his inheritance, and if we, the servants of Christ, would not be as was Dives here and hereafter, we must not wait for larger means, for more striking occasions, for more commanding motives to self-sacrifice than we have. We must enter now the secret chambers of our own hearts. We must listen to all that God has taught us, individually, of His own astonishing mercy to us in Jesus Christ—of our utter need of it. For us Christians, Christ is Lazarus to the end of time, coming to us from the dead, to warn us of our duty, receiving in the persons of His poor what we give as given to Himself. Surely no social catastrophe, no unforeseen Providence, no palpable miracle, could constrain us more effectually than His boundless, His patient, His unmerited love—than those Divine words of His which faith, it seems to me, must trace over the door of every hospital—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me."

"VANITY OF VANITIES!"

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 6TH, 1876.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?"—ECCLES. i. 2, 3.

JUST at this time of the year the Book of Ecclesiastes is read in the daily lessons. The first chapter—from which this text is taken—was read last Thursday morning; and when this book begins, all who read or who listen attentively feel that it places them in many respects in a new atmosphere, unlike that of any one other book in the Bible—unlike, for instance, that of Job, on the one hand, or the Proverbs of Solomon, on the other, which it most nearly resembles. I do not now refer to those recognised difficulties about the purpose and interpretation of this book which led the Jews, centuries ago, to raise the question whether it should ever be read in public or studied by any Israelite under the age of thirty; for these difficulties have largely disappeared beneath the more thorough and penetrating study which Christians have brought to bear upon the book. The verses which occasioned them are now seen to be entirely a foil to the great master-truths which the book as a whole was designed to place before the people of God. But the general drift of the book is peculiar to itself. It gives us an estimate of life which, to a certain extent, reappears in our Lord's teaching, but which is, generally speaking, in the background throughout the Old Testament. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher: all is vanity. What profit hath a man in all the labour that he taketh under the sun?"

Now, this text, as has often been remarked, is the keynote of the book. The word translated "vanity" occurs thirty-seven times in it, and this word means, properly speaking, a breath of wind; and thus it comes to mean something airy, something fictitious, something unsubstantial. "Vanity" here is that which vanishes rapidly, completely: it is that which leaves no appreciable effect behind: it is that which thus fails and

must fail to satisfy the true, the deeper, wants of man. And “vanity of vanities” means, as a well-known Hebrew idiom, that which is in the highest degree empty and resultless, just as “holy of holies” means that which is holy beyond every other place or thing. And this expression, “vanity of vanities,” is applied by the writer both to the course of nature and to the works of man. “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity.” Again and again he makes an excursion into the natural world—into some district of human society or life. Again and again he returns to the old refrain, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher : all is vanity. What profit hath a man in the labour that he taketh under the sun ?”

We need not go beyond the first division of this book, in which the royal writer, Solomon, gives his own personal experience. When he mounted the throne of Israel, as we heard in the first lesson this afternoon, the gifts of wisdom and of riches were promised him ; and the promises had been abundantly fulfilled. He tells us that the great gift of wisdom—that is to say, of observation, of judgment, of that knowledge of mankind and of life which results from these faculties—had ended in disappointment. It had only enabled him to see the imperfection and the disorder of human work—man’s inability to rise by his own efforts to anything like true perfection. Every fresh addition to the writer’s knowledge told him how much there was behind which he did not and could not know. Nature became to him more and more inaccessible,—Providence more and more mysterious,—the farther he pursued his investigations. “I gave my heart to seek and search out all wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight : that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly : I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief : and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” And, as with wisdom, so with his other great gift of wealth. It came to him in untinted profusion, beyond any Eastern monarch of time ; and he knew how to make the most of it for the embellishment and enjoyment of his life. “I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards : I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them with all kinds of fruits : I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees : I got me slaves and maidens, and had slaves born in my house. Also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold metal, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I gat me men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men and musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem ; and whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy ; for my heart rejoiced in my labour.” And what was the result ? He adds with a pathos which, at this distance of all the centuries, a reader cannot but feel, “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do ; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” Nay, he goes a step farther. Although, as he observes, men differ profoundly in themselves, there are certain respects in which all are alike, and which illustrate what he calls the vanity or emptiness of life. All—wise and foolish, good and bad—are subjected to occurrences beyond their control.

All die : all are forgotten. Uncertainty, disappointment, in whatever measure, sooner or later is the lot of all. "I said in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even unto me." He cannot escape—he cannot repress the expression of—deep dissatisfaction with life, which finds vent in sentences of great intensity of feeling. "I hated life," he says, "because the work that is done under the sun is grievous unto me ; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun : because I should leave it unto the man that should come after me. And who knoweth," he adds, "whether he shall be a wise man or a fool ?"

And in this mood the preacher looks out beyond the sphere of human life. He looks out upon nature, and nature reflects his feeling back upon himself. In nature all seems to him to move in recurring cycles without any lasting result—without any true progress. The sun in the heavens, the wind veering from point to point, the rivers ever running into the sea, yet never filling it, illustrate to his mind the vanity, the unsubstantial character, of life. "The sun ariseth, and he goeth down and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north ; it whirleth about continually, the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers," he complains, "run into the sea ; yet the sea is not full ; unto the place from which the rivers come, thither they return again. All things," he sighs, "all things are full of labour ; man cannot utter it : the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done is that which shall be done : and there is nothing new under the sun."

The vanity of life and of that which encompasses it has been brooded over by the human mind under the influences of very different currents and moods of thought. Men have often spoken after this fashion when under the influence of a disdainful and false estimate of all that is truly human. The heart of man seems to have powers of rigid contraction which at least rival its powers of generous sympathy. Philosophy before now has lived in a tub, as if the better to express its native incapacity of doing justice to human interests and human sympathies in all their play and variety. The Cynic cried, after his fashion, to the ancient world, "Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity." The Stoic crushed all human feeling into insensibility at the dictation of a refined pride ; and then as he looked out upon life he echoed in his own language, too, "Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity." And although these schools of thought have been buried for many long ages beneath the dust of our libraries, their spirit belongs to a type of character which reappears regularly in successive generations. A very refined pride may, for a moment, talk of the world in accents which might pass for those of a very sensitive and lofty piety. Mere conceited or heartless disdain for the usual interests, occupations, enthusiasms of man, may join in apparent concert with the faith which has learnt to measure things temporal by the standard of things eternal. That this is not the temper of the author of Ecclesiastes is plain enough. The sneer of the Cynic, my brethren, knows nothing of the pathos of human weakness, and disappointment, and suffering ; and the Book of Ecclesiastes is especially pathetic. Look—to take one instance only—at the writer's picture of the unredeemed oppression of which, two thousand years ago as now, Eastern annals were so full. He might almost seem to have his eye upon the nameless atrocities of which our fellow Christians in Bulgaria have lately been the victims. "I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun,

and beheld the tears of such as are oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.” The writer of these lines felt that the order of the world was out of joint ; but he had nothing in common with the selfish disdain for human interests and life to which I have referred.

But language like this has been more often used by those who have had bitter experience of life. “ All is vanity ” has been the sigh prompted by rude disappointment, by perishing hopes, by wearied or exhausted passion. Human nature is wont at times to turn round upon itself very surprisingly, as if in a spirit of vindictive reprisal ; and when it has drained out the cup of self-indulgence it will condemn itself in the language of a stern asceticism, which only, after all, expresses the enfeeblement and disgust of its recoil from gratifications which have ceased to please.

“ Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity.” This was the spirit of those words of the great English Cardinal as he lay a-dying at Leicester Abbey, and reflected that he had given his best years and strength to promote ambitions which had nothing to do with the eternal future. This was the temper of the language ascribed to that prince of voluptuaries, King Louis XIV. of France, when death, he knew, was near at hand, and the life which had been surrounded with such state and such splendour was sensibly ebbing. And something like this may be heard, perhaps, in more than one London household at this time of the year, at the close of what is called “ the season.” Three or four months of fatiguing gaiety have been prepared for just as systematically as a military campaign. Time, health, peace of mind, opportunities for real improvement, regular times of prayer—I know not what else—have been sacrificed to the pursuit of some social Will-o’-the-wisp,—to marrying this daughter—to securing that introduction—to achieving some distinction which, judged by any real estimate, is worse than worthless ; and now, when time and money and, perhaps, health and temper have been sacrificed, and nothing has been achieved that was originally attempted, we hear, rendered into modern language, the regretful accents of some portion of the crowd which is rushing away by every express train to bury its disappointment in some far off country villages, “ Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all the labour which he taketh under the sun ? ”

And it has been maintained that in the Book of Ecclesiastes, too, we have before us only the regrets of a jaded Epicurean. But a little consideration will show that this is far from being the true meaning and temper, whether of the text or of the book. We have seen that the vanity of wisdom, as well as the vanity of wealth and all that it can command, is the theme of the book. But the sorrows of baffled intelligence certainly do not enter into the experience of the worn-out voluptuary ; and a man who had quarrelled with the world and with life, only because they had failed to gratify him, could never, never have written the last chapter of this book. Instead of the conclusion of the whole matter which we have here—“ Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man ”—disappointment of this kind commonly finds vent in a morbid despair,—possibly, in suicide.

But it may be asked, “ If neither subtle pride, nor weary disgust, prompted this language, is it not possible that a refined mysticism, like that of the founder of the Indian Buddhism, may have had something to do with it ? Have we not here,” it has been said, “ a sample of that

unhealthy straining after the transcendental which deadens men to the actual circumstances and facts among which their probation for another life is to be wrought out in this? Is not this an ebullition, half metaphysical, half religious, such as the world has listened to again and again in the course of its history, but which, when judged most leniently, can only be deemed an amiable mistake?” No, brethren, again, this is the spirit neither of the text nor of the book.

The Preacher does not ignore the circumstances and duties of this life, while he insists that this life does not really satisfy. He apportions to our earthly life its incidents and its obligations with great particularity. “To everything,” he says, “there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck off that which is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up; and a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away; a time to rend and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.” Such a recognition—such a distribution—of human activity as this is certainly the last thing that we should expect in an abstracted mystic who had lost all interest in human concerns,—who expected to be absorbed into some upper ocean, whether of being or of nothingness.

The true lesson of this Book of Ecclesiastes, and especially of the text before us, is this—that this earthly life cannot possibly satisfy a being like man if it be lived apart from God. Apart from God, intellectual enterprise—what the Preacher calls “wisdom”—does but disappoint. It lands us at its best in the sublime despair of philosophy. Apart from God, wealth and all that it can command yields much less satisfaction than intellectual effort, since it is more material—since it is farther removed from the higher and imperishable nature of man. Apart from God, nature itself, regarded as matter interpenetrated by force, presents nothing upon which man’s inmost being can possibly rest. Here we have only cycles of unvarying laws, repeating themselves throughout the ages with a monotony that mocks our anxious interest. Vanity—that is to say, emptiness, disappointment—is thus traced on nature, on wealth, on thought. As a matter of fact, man does find in them no real satisfaction or stay. He finds nothing that can allay the wasting fever of the heart—nothing which will still remain to him, strong and intact, in the hour of approaching death. And the reason for this is threefold. All that belongs to created life has on it the mark of failure, the mark of finiteness, and the mark of approaching dissolution.

On human life, whether in thought or action, as on the face of nature, there is the stamp of failure. All we can see is not as it should be. Man—the best of men—is conscious of this within himself. The weakness and warp of his will, the tyranny of circumstance, the fatal inclinations downwards of which he is constantly conscious, the indecision at critical moments of life when all depends upon a concentrated resolve, the precautions which he finds it necessary to take against himself in the way of rule and law,—all these and other like symptoms tell a tale of some past catastrophe from which human life has suffered in its deepest recesses. And nature, too, with its weird mysteries of waste and pain—a waste that seems to have no object, and a pain that baffles us by the strange unevenness of its distribution—nature with all its beauty speaks

“VANITY OF VANITIES !”

of some great failure, too, experienced in some distant age. And here the Apostle comes to the aid of revelation, when he tells us that the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, and when he connects this with the first introduction of moral evil into the human world, which we call the fall of Adam, and therefore adds that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Nature has on it its certificate of failure and emptiness, and its subtle, fatal, pervading taint is a first warrant for the exclamation, as man looks out upon life, “Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity.”

But besides this, life and nature are finite, so that if even they corresponded to what God meant them to be, they would fail completely to satisfy a being like man. There is one line in this very book, Ecclesiastes, which our version appears to translate imperfectly, and the true meaning of which will give the key to what I am saying. When the writer is translated as saying that God hath set the world in the heart of man, the word “world” should be translated “eternity.” God has set eternity in the human heart. The human soul, itself finite, is made for the infinite ; and the infinite considered with reference to duration is also the eternal. The soul cannot comprehend—it can apprehend—the infinite. In the inmost thought and heart of man, God has placed a vast unfathomable capacity for apprehending Himself in all the boundlessness of His love ; and thus, as man can think of a Being Who has neither beginning nor end of days—a Being Who inhabits and is Himself eternity,—as man struggles more and more perfectly to apprehend this Being, to reach Him, to enjoy Him, to possess Him, to find and to feel in Him the counterpart, the satisfaction, of all that is deepest and most mysterious within himself,—as the eternal world and He Who is its Measure and its King are thus placed by his Maker in the heart of man—man cannot really be satisfied with anything else or less. “Thou hast made us,” cries St. Augustine,—“Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.” Man as a race is like those captains of whom we read, more than once, in history, that once having believed a throne to be within their grasp, they never could settle down again quietly, as contented subjects. Man as man has a profound, an ineradicable instinct of his splendid destiny. He knows that the objects which meet his eye,—that the average words which fall upon his ear,—that the common thoughts, and purposes, and passions which haunt his heart and his brain,—are very far indeed from being adequate to his real capacity. He is predestinated, he feels, for an unseen magnificence, and yet to himself he ever seems to be forfeiting his great predestination. And, therefore, when he turns to survey the comparative poverty, the pettiness, of the grandest objects that woo his heart in this earthly life, he exclaims, not in scorn, not in weariness, but, if I may say so, in a spirit of most religious and most scientific accuracy, “Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity.”

Once more. All that belongs to human and created life passes quickly—passes away. True, this is a common-place, but common-places are apt to be forgotten from their very truth and obviousness. All around is perishing. “One generation passeth away and another cometh :” so says the Preacher. “Man faded away suddenly like the grass :” so sings the Psalmist. “The earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved :” so teaches one Apostle. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise : the elements shall melt with a fervent heat ;” so proclaims another Apostle. Yes, all passes, even the choice furniture of the human mind itself—all but the imperishable central self. “As for knowledge,” says

the Apostle—meaning earthly knowledge—"it shall vanish away." It will disappear with its object-matter. "When man turns again to his dust, then all his thoughts perish." "There is no man," says the Preacher, "who has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death. There is no discharge in that war." Personality survives with its moral history intact. All else goes and is forgotten. And therefore, because nature and the outer husk of life do thus pass away, they cannot satisfy: they cannot afford a stay and resting-place for the imperishable soul of man. "Vanity of vanities," he exclaims, as he discovers their real character with the passing years: "all is vanity."

To this way of regarding life and nature there is an objection which, before this, will have occurred to some of you. "Is this way of looking at life," it has been said, "a healthy one? Is it calculated to make a man do his duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to call him? If he sets out by thinking his surrounding circumstances vanity—his state of life vanity—the useful knowledge he has acquired vanity—the faculties by which he is acquiring it vanity—is he likely to do his duty cheerfully, honestly, thoroughly? Is he not likely rather to fail, and to make his circumstances, his state of life, his information or wisdom—subject as all these are said to be to vanity—responsible for his failure?" And to this I answer, once more, that human effort is only vanity when it is pursued without reference to God. Man's capacities are meant to lead him to God. They may and do—all of them—lead many men very near to Him. And all that leads to Him is solid: it provides for eternity. So far from being vanity, its value is lasting and substantial. When the Preacher asks the question, "What profit hath a man of all the labour which he taketh under the sun?" the answer is, no profit at all, if he is working only for himself—only for ends which lie within the world of sense and time—only for that which will not remain with him, and which could not satisfy him if it did remain with him; but immediate and most abundant profit if he is working for eternity—working for God. In a life such as this, nothing is vanity, nothing is unsatisfying, nothing is lost: all is ennobled. God, the last reality, makes all that tends to Him completely real. Christ our Lord has passed His pierced hands in blessing over human life in all its aspects. He has redeemed it from the triviality and the aimlessness of its heathen days. He has washed and invigorated not merely the souls but the activities of men in His own cleansing blood. He has baptised not merely the children of Adam: He has baptised knowledge, literature, art, social intercourse, for those who truly serve Him. Our life which, in itself, as St. James has told us, is "even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away," becomes in His Divine and redemptive hands the antechamber of an existence which is far more solid than the everlasting hills. Beneath His cross nothing is vain—nothing empty and resultless—nothing in the least degree trivial, because His open tomb has opened prospects for the sons of men which render all that enables us to make a step towards them solid and precious; only everything depends upon the reality and purity of our motives—upon our power of seeing this life and the next in their true perspectives—upon our power of not forgetting eternity amid the things of time. In Solomon's words, then, we have a means of testing our actual religious condition—the true direction and bias of our wills.

"Vanity of vanities! all is vanity." Does this seem to us in our heart of hearts exaggerated language—unreasonable—mere rhetoric? Does it appear to us to express emotions which we are willing to believe have had

their day—their day of empire over human souls, but which for us, at least, have no meaning? For us, considering that these words are meant by the Holy Spirit to be a standard of that kind of thought and feeling about life which is acceptable with God, is there not cause for grave uneasiness? Brethren, a man who is living for another world sits easily to this. He fills his place in it : he takes an interest in it : he would fail in his duty if this were otherwise. But his heart is elsewhere, as our Lord says : it has followed his treasure. His citizenship is already in heaven : he looks not for the things that are seen, but for the things that are not seen, reflecting as he does that the things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal. He is as a stranger and pilgrim far from home : he is as a soldier on campaign duty. All that comes in his way is precious as enabling him to conquer the enemy, or to reach his home. All else is a matter more or less of indifference. Sooner or later life tests us, or rather God tests us through the circumstances of life. We reach a parting in the road where we have, by an act of our own, to make a choice between the path of duty and the path of sacrifice ; or we are called to resign into God's hand the friend, or the privilege, or the occupation, or the possession, which was nearest to our heart ; or we are made aware, perhaps, for the first time, of the near approach of death ; and death is a revelation of the true value of this world and of the next. When death is felt to be near, men read this verse—they read this whole Book of Ecclesiastes—with new eyes. They know then that they are taking leave of a world of shadows : they know that, moment by moment, they are parting with the apparent,—that they are drawing nearer and nearer to the real.

May God teach us to make these words our own in some sincere sense, before we die ! May He enable us to welcome all teaching, all influences, all circumstances, which make the lesson that all that does not lead to Him is, surely, vanity, easier to learn ! May He give us each one clearness of sight and strength of purpose, whilst this life lasts, and by His enlightening and strengthening grace turn away our eyes lest they behold vanity, and quicken us in His eternal way !

MISUSED PRIVILEGES AN OCCASION OF FALLING.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 13TH, 1876.

"Let their table be made a snare to take themselves withal : and let the things that should have been for their wealth, be unto them an occasion of falling."—Ps. lxxix. 23. (Prayer Book version.)

THIS 69th Psalm which we have been singing this afternoon was written by King David during his exile from Jerusalem, in the time of Absalom's rebellion. David and Jeremiah had much in common, and this circumstance has led some modern writers to attribute the Psalm to Jeremiah, while others have ascribed it to a latter author in the time of the Babylonish captivity. There is no real reason for rejecting the guidance of the inscription which ascribes it to David. The desolation of the writer of this Psalm was never approached by that of Jeremiah who, though banished from the king's court, found pity and encouragement among the princes, nor yet by any inspired person of the date of the captivity, since such a person would have found, among his fellow captive countrymen, countenance and comfort to his heart's content. David was much more desolate than were these, during the short-lived triumph of his son ; but even David was not so desolate as his own language would imply. "I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children. Thou hast known my reproof, and my shame, and my dishonour. My adversaries are all before me. Thy reproof hath broken my heart. I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to have pity on me, and there was no man ; neither found I any to comfort me." David, though an exile beyond the Jordan, was still not wholly without sympathising adherents ; and accordingly we have to account for his thus speaking in the first person, and using language which does not strictly apply to his

own case, and which, in an uninspired writer, we should call exaggerated. The truth is that David, after beginning with his own troubles, forgets himself. He loses himself in the thought of another higher and greater than he. Something like this may be observed in non-religious genius. It is always bursting the confines of individual life, and reaching on as best it may towards the perfect and the universal. The Divine Spirit which fills the soul of David sweeps him onward as he sings—carries him out of and beyond himself—carries him onwards—carries him upwards. David began with the thought of the bands collected by his own rebel son ; David is thinking now of all the marshalled hosts of evil—of all the aggregate of human opposition to the cause of God. He began with the thought of his own injuries, and the wrongs done to himself, sinner that he is : he is thinking now of some perfectly righteous man—some pure and unsullied sample of the race—who is exposed to the insults and the cruelties of the foes of God. Everything has been heightened, widened, transfigured, since he began to sing. He is living now in a distant, and, as we should say, an ideal, world : he is moving among circumstances to which his own bear some resemblance, but which are altogether on a larger moral scale. The woes and the desolation of which he sings are, like the righteousness, beyond his own. When applied to himself, all, as I have said, seems overstrained, exaggerated.

David was laid with his fathers. Ages passed, and, as we Christians know, one at last appeared in whom the words of several psalms, which seemed too ideal to have reference to any actual human life, were found to be literally fulfilled. He came, so perfect that the best human efforts and aspirations after goodness discovered that he satisfied, or, rather, transcended, them. He came, so broken by suffering both of the mind and body that it was vain to seek elsewhere for any who had suffered as He. The language which, in David's mouth, seems to have a taint of exaggeration, if applied to himself, reads as accurate and natural if it be placed on the sacred lips of Jesus Christ ; and, feeling this, our Lord quoted the Psalter, and the evangelists applied it freely to Him. And on account of the remarkable correspondence which exists between the picture of a desolate sufferer which this psalm sets before us, and the actual history of our Lord, more verses are quoted of it than from any other single psalm by the writers of the New Testament. Christ's estrangement from His brethren, His zeal for the Temple of God, His exposure to the reproaches of God's enemies, His shame, His heaviness, His dishonour, the gall which they gave Him to drink as He hung upon the Cross, the punishment which awaited His persecutors, and especially Judas, the penal curse, as in the text before us, which awaited the nation that rejected Him—all these are noted in the New Testament itself in the very words of David.

Now, this may enable us to understand the true drift and meaning of the verse which is before us this afternoon,—“ Let their table be made a snare to take them withal ; and let the things that should have been for their wealth be a trap unto them.”

You are familiar, my brethren, with the comments that are often made on inspired words like these. “ What a spirit,” men say, “ is here ! How unlike the mild, tender, charitable spirit of our Master, Christ ! How unfit to be repeated by Christians who have been taught in the school of Christ ! How much more agreeable to the fierce temper of the Old Testament than to the gentle forgiving temper of the New.” This, and the like of this, is what is said, and it proceeds upon two leading mistakes of which we will, at this point, take notice.

The first is that the New Testament was meant somehow to abrogate the Old. This was a fancy of some very early heretics, and it has been largely revived in modern days. It is the fashion to treat the New Testament as if it were like a short Act of Parliament which summarily repealed a vast accumulation of useless and mischievous legislation belonging to earlier times. Our Lord, quite at the beginning of His ministry, noticed this mistake in order to condemn it. "I am not come," He said, "to destroy the law, but to fulfil." And His Apostle taught that "whatsoever things were written aforetime," in the Old Testament Scriptures, were written for the learning of Christians. Both Testaments are really the work of one Author,—of that holy and eternal Spirit Who, as the absolute truth, can not contradict Himself. Certainly, my brethren, the New Testament does tell us a good deal more, both about God and about man, than we learn from the Old ; but then addition is not repeal : progress is not necessarily contradiction of the past. The Old Testament lives in the New, which honours, by fulfilling it. Its typical and sacrificial system has eternal significance in the person and the work of Christ. Its moral teaching is a substantial part of the revealed will of God now, as when it was first propounded. And such verses as the text have their parallel in the New Testament. It was Christ Who said, "These Mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before Me." It is St. Paul who pronounces the sentence, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil. The Lord reward him according to his works."

And the second mistake is that God's love is, in some kind of way, the antagonist of His justice,—that He cannot be really just without ceasing to love,—that He cannot love without trifling with His instinct of justice. Language is used which might seem to imply that, in Old Testament time, God lost His temper with wicked people, and said so, and that in New Testament time He became good-natured, and unsaid all that He had said before ; and thus men read their earthly, their human thoughts, into both revelations. They know well what they are themselves—irritable and indulgent by fits and starts ; and all unconsciously to themselves they ascribe their own littleness and weakness to the awful and unchangeable Creator. Brethren, justice and mercy, so far from being hostile qualities, are inseparable. Without justice, mercy is but weakly indulgence. Without mercy, justice is but a soulless executioner. Each is a foil to the other : each is essential to the completeness of the other. The tenderest love must be stern when duty bids. The most vivid idea of an unswerving justice, based on an unfathomable love, which we gain from scripture, lies in that awful and pregnant expression of the beloved disciple, "The wrath of the Lamb."

And let us remember at this point that, in the verse before us, we are listening, not to David, but to the perfectly righteous Being in Whose person David sings. If this verse were, indeed, an outburst of selfish human spite or vindictiveness, it could have no place in the Book of God : it could only be noticed to be condemned, like the saying of the friends of Job, or of the fool who said in his heart, "There is no God." But here we have a sentence which has nothing to do with human passion,—which is based on the most certain laws which govern the moral world. The will of the speaker is one with the will of the All-Holy. The sentence is a penal judgment—the grammar will hardly allow us to call it a prediction—a penal judgment uttered against those who have been sinners against the light vouchsafed to them.

The terms of the sentence are sufficiently general : the meaning is clear enough

God does, my brethren, under certain circumstances, make the very blessings which He bestows instruments of punishment. A time comes when long unfaithfulness provokes the sentence on a nation, a Church, a soul. "Let their table be made a snare to take them withal : and let the things which should have been for their wealth be to them an occasion of falling." By the figure of a table is meant a supply of necessary nourishment, whether of soul or body. The table which God prepared before David in the presence of his enemies was the food which sustained his physical life—the grace which sustained the life of his spirit. The table which is spread out before associations of men—before nations, before Churches—is the sum total of material, moral, mental, and spiritual nourishment which God sets before them in the course of their history. The table becomes a snare when the blessings which God gives become sources of corruption and of demoralisation,—when that which was intended to raise and to invigorate does really, through the faithlessness or perverseness of the man or the society, serve only to weaken or depress.

Now, this is exactly what happened to the great majority of the Jewish people in the days of our Lord and His Apostles. Read over the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans—(the second lesson it was for this morning's service)—and you will there see that St. Paul is so far from thinking that this verse of the 69th Psalm which he there quotes had nothing in common with—the spirit of the New Testament, that he directly applies it to the majority of his countrymen, who had just recently, and of set purpose, rejected our Lord Jesus Christ. True, a faithful remnant was left in Elijah's days—a remnant which had received the Christian faith ; but the mass of the Jewish people, St. Paul says, were blinded ; their spiritual sense was benumbed ; they could not recognise the truth to which all their own past history was but an avenue and an introduction ; and their table was itself a snare to take themselves withal. Before the eyes of Israel, God, in His love and in His bounty, had spread a table furnished as was that of no other people in the ancient world. It was not wanting in signal gifts belonging to the order of nature. It was unique in its possession of the great gifts of grace. The people which dwelt around the thrones of David and of Solomon might compare in natural prowess, in genius, in skill, with the great nations around them. But their endowments were of another description. St. Paul loves to dwell on the spiritual privileges accorded to his countrymen, on the peculiar sense in which Israel, among the nations, was God's Son, on the Divine glory that rested visibly on the sacred ark, on the ancient covenants with God of which even His own generation was the heir, on the holy moral law of God revealed in terms to no other people, on the institutes of worship prescribed by Him to Whom that worship was offered, on the holy patriarchs long since dead, and yet the perpetual possession of their children, on the promises all rising towards and centering in one person, the hope of so many generations of Israelites—the hope of all the nations which were to be blessed through Israel. What He was to be like, what He was to do, what He was to suffer, how He was to touch the confines of utter failure, and then to achieve the most glorious of triumphs, the exact time of His appearance and its effects—all, and more, had been foretold. Before the eyes of this favoured people the future was thus unravelled, and their whole history and literature, their glories, their humiliations, as well as their institutions of worship and teaching, pointed on to Him. Each catastrophe that humbled them, each triumph that encouraged them, each prophet that spoke to them, thus prepared the way of their Lord, and led them one step nearer to His blessed feet Who was to be the flower and the summit of their glorious history. This was the table spread before the eyes of Israel. It became a snare to take themselves withal. They were furnished with divine instructions in their sacred books. Instead of submitting themselves to these great revelations of the mind of God, instead of welcoming with open hearts these lofty soul-stirring truths, the Jews devoted themselves to the study of curious verbal alliterations and cabalistic puzzles ; or else they made their Bibles say what they themselves wished ; and as they wished for great earthly fortunes, and had no mind for heavenly destiny, they learned to read their own ambitions, their own follies, their own passions and prejudices, into the sacred page which should have taught them. And thus it happened that

when Moses saw a veil was upon their hearts. And then they had a system of sacrifice—rites designed to suggest a profound spiritual meaning; and they resolutely clung to the mere outward act to the neglect of its spirit and meaning. And they lived under a policy which was itself a shadow of heavenly things: they treated it as earthly, and yet as perpetual. One by one, the spiritual senses which should have led Israel to recognise the Christ were benumbed or destroyed. Seeing, they could see but could not perceive: hearing, they could hear but could not understand. The heart of the people was waxed gross; and when He came to be the glory of His people Israel, as well as a light to lighten the Gentiles, His people would have none of Him. No threats of persecution from without would have cowed a race which had survived Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus. The mischief came from within. A perverse insensibility to the voice of God made God's best gifts the instruments of Israel's ruin; and at length the sentence went forth in heaven, "Let Israel's table be made a snare to take himself withal. Let the things which should have been for his wealth, be to him an occasion of falling."

The penal judgment which is given in the text, which actually fell upon the Jewish people, may, under distinct yet parallel circumstances, fall also upon other nations—nations ancient and modern, within and without the pale of Christendom; for every nation, like every man, has, by God's appointment, first a material and moral or spiritual outfit, and secondly a particular work or destiny, just as was the case with Israel. God by His providence, endows each people with its peculiar gift or collection of gifts. He spreads for it its table of civilisation and of life. Not to speak for a moment of those gifts which are greater than any other earthly gifts—the knowledge of revealed truth and the means of grace—one country becomes the peculiar mistress and home of law,—another of commercial industry,—and a third of literary or artistic genius,—and a fourth of energetic and warm-hearted philanthropy; this people has an aptitude for colonising,—that for administration,—this for world-wide empire,—that for the apostolate of human liberty and of human rights. And, as the years pass, the history of each people unrolls itself in accordance with the temper and the faculties bestowed upon it. Its table of civilisation is gradually furnished by the bountiful flow of the human universe. But then He who furnishes the table expects His guests to fulfil their destiny. Each people has some work to do for His honour or for humanity, in accordance with the gifts which He has bestowed on it. And it has, too, its times of trouble when its faithfulness is tested by the giver, just like Israel. It may fulfil its destiny, or it may fail. Its well furnished table, or providential capacities and gifts, may easily become a snare to take itself withal. The things which should have been for its wealth may be to it an occasion of falling.

Certainly we cannot doubt, that, among the nations of the world, to few, if to any, have been given such various, such signal blessings as to our own dear country—to England. It is not national self-love—it is a legitimate and most religious instinct of gratitude—which traces in the annals of our country, centuries ago, the loving hand of God fashioning for Himself the character, the destinies of a great people. He gave to England twice over in our earliest history that which is more precious, alike for time and for eternity, than any other gift—the religion of His Son Jesus Christ. And those repeated conquests of our land, by Saxon, by Dane, by Norman—what were they but the fusion of many races into one, of many types of character and capacity into one? What were they but the needful preliminaries to the production of an imperial people which should combine in itself much which elsewhere was found apart? And then the long struggles on English soil between race and race—between class and class—between this great family aspiring to rule, and that; the great act by which we set aside the usurped authority of Rome; the civil wars, themselves so full of violence and crime, yet in their results so pregnant with the happiest consequences; the gradual absorption into the national unity of the Celtic races around us,—all of these causes have, under the good guidance of our God, furnished our national table, made us the free, practical, orderly, industrious, happy people that, speaking broadly, we are. If, for more than a century, we have not known what civil strife is,—if, while Europe has been distracted by revolution and by conquest, have been permitted

to sit, each man under his vine and his fig-tree, not without anxiety and yet secure,—if the causes which elsewhere have issued in convulsions fatal to society and to life have with us been recognised in time, and have only broadened and enlarged the basis of governments—if, amid much which still remains to do, there is a general and sincere desire, animating the classes upon which God has bestowed wealth and education, to do all that may be done to promote the well-being of their poorer countrymen,—if our colonies, now encompassing the globe, are so far from being anxious, as was the case a century since, to assert their independence, that they cling with an ever increasing tenacity of affection to the mother country, from a feeling, assuredly, that to be associated with the name and destinies of England is to have a share in one of the very choicest of God's natural gifts,—we have indeed reason to thank God for blessings which, be sure, are the envy and admiration of foreign nations—which are so intimately bound up with the well-being of our own. Certainly God has done much for us Englishmen ; but if this be so He expects much. The rule always holds, "To whom much is given, of them much shall be required." A great name, wealth, world-wide connections, above all, religious faith and privileges, are not bestowed for nothing. God has, indeed, furnished our table with this completeness and profusion, but then he expects us to do our duty, not merely to ourselves, but to Him and to all those of His creatures whose destinies we may be able to improve. Whether we English have been worthy of our high calling among the nations, heretofore, in our dealings with other peoples and in our domestic legislation and conduct, is a vast question, on which I may not attempt to enter ; but we are at this moment face to face with a great practical crisis, which will show what use we are going to make of God's gifts to us. As a rule, it is undoubtedly better for us, the ministers of Christ, to avoid reference to topics connected with the public action of the country—to refrain from any language which may, however undesignedly, make the task of those to whom are committed the responsibilities of government more difficult than it is. But there are times when silence is impossible without manifest disloyalty to the laws of Christ ; times when great moral and religious issues disentangle themselves completely from the involved and obscure issues of contemporary politics, and present themselves with direct and simple force to the national conscience ; times when we have, in the first instance, to consider not what is politically expedient, but what is moral, Christian, humane. And such a time is surely upon us now, when we, as a nation, are slowly awaking to a true estimate of recent events in Eastern Europe, and of our own involuntary share in them. Day by day we English are learning that this year of grace, 1876, has been signalised by a public tragedy which, I firmly believe, is without a parallel in modern times. The incredulity with which this tale of horror was first received is dying away. The heartless epigrams with which the subject was at first referred to have been silenced. People now scarcely mutter the word "exaggeration." They know that when all that must be deducted has been deducted on this score, the remainder of solid, unassailable fact is unspeakably horrible. A century hence the massacres of Bulgaria will stand out in tragic relief among the events of this age of the world's history ; for, indeed, they are no mere repetition of the violence which is inseparable from war. Not merely armed men, but women and young girls and babes, counted by hundreds—counted by thousands—subjected to the most refined cruelties—subjected to the last indignities—have been the victims of the Turk. And while I speak, and while you listen in this temple of the Prince of Peace, a loud cry, a bitter wail of anguish and despair, is rising up to heaven from thousands of desolated homes—rising from those mothers, those daughters, whose whole future earthly life can be henceforth only one long memory of agony and shame. This is no appeal to highly wrought sentimentalism. I say that the question before us is a question of elementary morality—whether the sixth and seventh commandments are, with our approval, to be outraged on a gigantic scale. It might fairly be pleaded for the power which has perpetrated these acts, that it knows not the name of Christ, and that its proceedings are not to be judged by the standard of a European and Christian civilisation. Be it so ; but that which makes the voice falter as we say it is that, through whatever misunderstanding, the government which is immediately responsible for acts like these has turned

for sympathy, for encouragement, not to any of the historical homes of despotism and oppression, not to any other European power, but, alas ! to England—to free, humane, Christian England. The Turk has, not altogether without reason, believed himself, amid these scenes of cruelty, to be leaning on our country's arm,—to be sure of her smile, or, at least, of her acquiescence. It may be true that if you ransack the past history of Christendom—the past history of England—nay, the very annals of that lower Greek Empire which preceded the Turk, the action of which on this soil of Bulgaria was, on one occasion, at least, sufficiently inhuman—there are materials for a telling retort. But if we Christians have done wrong in past ages, we can afford to confess it. We had hoped that in our public duties towards our fellow-men we were learning to do better. We cannot afford to be dragged as accomplices into the worst barbarism of the past, only to serve some abstruse political theory about the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. There are countries whose monarchs or governments can force them to act against their will. England is free, and when she acts deliberately her action is that of the English people. If we do not wish to be responsible before God—each man and woman in his and her degree—for a share in these massacres, it is our duty, my brethren, in our several ways, to say so. We cannot, before God, shift the responsibility upon a government which, at least, as much represents us as rules us, or upon an abstraction which we call, “the nation,” and which has no real existence apart from ourselves. It is for us to say whether we will continue to befriend a race which is what it has always been since it emerged from the wastes of Central Asia into history,—which is not likely to become other than it is. It is for us to say whether we will help to rivet the chains of an intolerable bondage upon millions who own, though it be amid imperfections, the glorious name of Christ, and who are as much entitled as ourselves to the gift of freedom and the gift of peace. They say, indeed, that, according to the last advices, the Turk has granted a general amnesty to such defenceless peasants in Bulgaria as had escaped extermination ; but this concession, extorted by his fear, rather than tinged by his remorse, will hardly reassure us. If the unchanging God is still what He was when He spake centuries since in the Jewish prophets, then He hates cruelty and oppression. He will punish those who enact and those who abet it. Now, as of old, the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners comes before Him. Now, as heretofore, right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of the defenceless and the innocent. And if we, whom He has so signally blest and favoured for so long a term of years, are willing to sacrifice to some supposed political or commercial necessity—I will not say our human sentiments, but the most elementary of our moral obligations—the dearest of the primal rights of man, then, indeed, we have reason to fear lest our richly-stored table of national prosperity, of world-wide empire, has not, indeed, become a snare to us,—lest a position that should have been for the help of the whole human race has not become to us the occasion of an utter and humiliating fall.

And, lastly, the verse applies to the religious life of the individual Christian. Every Christian has a certain endowment of blessings—what the Psalmist calls a “table.” Every Christian has to fulfil a certain predestined course. He has a work to do—a work which God's gifts enable him to do—before he dies. Admission to the Church of Christ and to membership in Christ by baptism, early opportunities of acquiring religious knowledge, the example and encouragement of Christian friends, the discipline of disappointment, bodily or mental, the strengthening and refreshing of the soul, by the body and blood of Christ, the use of the Holy Scripture as the daily school of instruction in the faith and duty,—these are our ordinary privileges. Of these we may well say, “The lines have fallen in a fair place : yea, I have a goodly heritage.” And yet each of these blessings may become to us, in the Psalmist's words, a trap, a snare, or an occasion of falling. Baptism becomes a snare when a man thinks that the grace which he has received in it cannot be forfeited by sin,—when he rests on it as if it relieved him from any anxiety to make progress in God's service. The atoning work of Christ becomes a snare when a man thinks that it secures salvation, however much he may forget the will of the Lord that bought him,—when he sins stoutly that grace may abound. The Holy Communion becomes a snare when men think

that the mere act of receiving it is enough, and that the dispositions of faith and repentance do not greatly matter. Holy Scripture becomes a snare—it is a snare to thousands—when it is studied merely or chiefly as literature, or for purposes of controversy, or for less respectable purposes than controversy,—when the question is never asked sincerely, by a man upon his knees, “What does God by His holy word say to me?” Prayer becomes a snare when we think of it as something we have got over,—when we are more intent upon having prayed than on how we pray,—when the lips move while the understanding, the affections, the will, are motionless. Friends become a snare when they in any way eclipse the friend of friends,—when they discolour, by a human admixture, the soul’s most sacred affections for her God,—when they exert unknowingly a downward, rather than an upward, influence. And there are cases when all the blessings of the Christian life become an occasion of falling altogether,—occasions when all is distorted, poisoned from within. Resistance to truth, to duty, which God has set before us, may bring upon us this penal judgment. In the life of the soul, not to go forward is to go back. Clearly, brethren, we have great need for care, if we will escape this judgment. What is to save us if our very food is poison,—if our religious privileges are doing us harm? The mischief may easily have begun before we are aware of it. Unbeknown to ourselves, our religious life may be tainted with half-heartedness, by insincerity. We may have closed our eyes to God’s higher teaching, in the pages of revelation, through the circumstances of life; and the dread sentence may have gone forth in heaven, “Let his table be made a snare to take himself withal. Let the things that should have been for his wealth be made to him an occasion of falling.”

It need not be so with any for whom Jesus Christ has died. It will not be so with any who sincerely desire to know all they can know about themselves, and who then place themselves with true sincerity of purpose in the hands of Him Who is Eternal wisdom and Eternal love.

CHRIST FEASTING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 27TH, 1876.

“ And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners ? ”—MARK ii. 16.

THE occasion of this question was the presence of our Saviour at the farewell feast in the house of Levi at Capernaum. Levi, or Matthew, as he is generally called, had determined to renounce his profession as a tax-collector, and to devote himself to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, before leaving his old occupation and his old associates, he gave an entertainment—a parting banquet to those with whom he had lived and worked for so many years. The native publicans who farmed the taxes under the Roman officials were a hard set of men, accustomed to acts of cruel extortion, and disposed to think cheaply of human feelings when their rough work had to be done ; and yet we may be sure that, on an occasion like this, they were not unmoved when they were going to take leave of one of their own class who had taken what they would have thought so surprising a determination, and who now was with them for the last time. It has been said that there is a soft place in the heart of the worst ruffians, and doubtless, in that gathering at Capernaum, eyes were moist and hearts were tender in deference to those instincts of our common nature which a life of crime and cruelty cannot wholly destroy. Together with the tax-gatherers or publicans were some sinners—persons who, whatever was their occupation in life, are only noticed by the evangelists on account of their bad character. Levi's business, as holding a lease of the taxes under some high official, would have been to extort as large a surplus as he could for himself out of the poor country people ; and, in order to do this thoroughly, he would probably have had recourse to the ruffianism of the neighbourhood. These sinners too, had been his friends ; they, too, had a place in his heart now that all was being changed, and that he himself was entering the kingdom of heaven. On them, as on his fellow publicans, he gazed, we may be sure, with a true affection. He could not but hope that, through the Divine mercy, it might one day be

with them as now with himself: and they, though they were, as yet, far, far from following him, must have felt the mysterious attraction and pathos of the time—that yearning for higher and better things of which few souls are entirely and always destitute.

But one other was also at that feast, whose presence has made it memorable to the end of time. In all his tender and majestic grace, Jesus Christ was there. Around Him was a band of faithful disciples, but around Him, too, were those hard publicans—those profligate, those unreclaimed sinners. They sat or they lay all around, marking His gestures, gazing on His countenance, listening to His words. No doubt He had kind and encouraging words for them, too, just as for the poor woman taken in adultery—just as for the Magdalen whose very presence shocked the Pharisees—just as for the thief hanging beside Him on the cross. And thus, at the board of Matthew, on that day, the associations of an old life from which he was parting for ever were brought into immediate contact with the privileges and blessings of a new life just opening upon him.

Such frontier posts there are in nearly every human career—days of critical and lasting consequence, when all that has been and is renounced is, for a moment, close to all that is accepted and is to be. Rare and memorable days are these—days which, from the nature of the case, cannot be repeated—days in which men crowd into the passing moments the feelings and the thoughts of years. Matthew, we may be sure, looked back upon that entertainment with undying interest to his very last hour; or, rather, from his glorious place in bliss, he even now looks back to it as marking the moment of his completed passage from death unto life. And Jesus, we may dare to believe, shed on those poor rude sinners—on that band of disciples—above all, on that loving and repentant servant who was now turning to Him for ever and in earnest—His own approving smile and blessing. He lit up an occasion which would else have been insignificant, with the beauty of another world.

But near at hand there were others beside the publicans and sinners—beside the Divine Master and His band of disciples. These others had not been present at the feast. No instructed scribe, no highly respected Pharisee, would for all the world have broken bread in the company of publicans and sinners; and they were alive—keenly alive—to the influences of the time. They were interested in what was passing: they were looking on at it: they were making their observations. As the company broke up and one by one left the house of Matthew, the scribes and Pharisees advanced to ask a question of the disciples of Jesus, “How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”

Now, it would seem likely that this question was asked partly in ignorance and partly in ill will.

Partly, I say, in ignorance. Some who asked it would, in all probability, have had a very false and artificial conception of the true character and duties of a religious teacher. They understood Jesus Christ to claim to be in the line of the prophets and John the Baptist, but to claim to be greater than the greatest of his predecessors. They do not ask themselves what had been the practice of the prophets, but only what they should like in a religious teacher of their own day. They wanted a man who, whatever else he was or did, would flatter their prejudices. In their inmost hearts they conceived of him, not as the servant of the truth, but as the servant of the respectable. He was, above all things, to flatter the self-satisfaction of the respectable: he was to denounce sinners at a distance: he was on no account to pollute himself by contact with them: he was to be very careful to stand well with that narrow section of society which claimed in those days to represent all the truth and goodness that was in Palestine. He must not embark in any fanciful schemes for the good of others at the risk of his own character for respectability. These scribes and Pharisees knew very well what they would have done, had they been in the place of Jesus; and therefore they asked the disciples in a spirit of puzzled curiosity, “How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners.”

But the question was also in part suggested by ill will. Some there were among the scribes and Pharisees, even at this date, who had no kindly feelings towards Jesus Christ. They saw in Him the successor of John the Baptist:

they knew that the Baptist had denounced them as a generation of vipers. An unerring instinct told them that, between the elevation and keen-sightedness of our Lord and their own accustomed ways of dealing with questions of life and duty, there could be no real peace. They had not yet listened to the solemn words which He afterwards uttered against their insincerity, just before His death, when the breach had become irreparable; but they already knew what His judgment about them would and must be. Accordingly, the instinct of a far-sighted hostility made them quick to detect, if they could, in His life and conduct, any trace of inconsistency, and when they saw Him seated at a festive board with men of a discredited occupation—with persons of low and abandoned character, as they no doubt would have expressed it—with the collected depravity of the neighbourhood—they believed that the desired opportunity had come. Was this the successor of the ascetic Baptist whom all counted as a prophet,—who had repeated, in a degenerate age, the stern life of the ancient saint and solitary—Elijah the Tishbite? Was this mixed rabble the practical commentary on that high standard of conduct which Christ had propounded—on those unsparing censures of others which had fallen from His lips—on that pretension to reconstruct human life on a new basis which was the essence of His teaching—on that claim to found on earth a society which should deserve the name of the kingdom of heaven? How could all this pretension be reconciled with so intimate an association with the assembled profligacy of eastern Galilee, such as they saw before their eyes? No, these scribes and Pharisees had felt all along that He was not really what He seemed to be. They felt that they had only to wait long enough, and to keep their eyes open, and they would find Him out. Their opportunity had come at last: this was their hour. They had only to call attention to His proceedings in eating with publicans and sinners, and even His disciples could not defend so flagrant an inconsistency. When it was generally known, there would be an end of His influence. It was in a quietly bitter tone of simulated embarrassment—of ill suppressed satisfaction—that this sect of the scribes and Pharisees echoed the question, “How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”

Our Lord would not leave to His simple and timid disciples the task of answering His critics. The question fell on His ears, and He interposed to meet it by a rebuke and an explanation.

First of all, He rebuked, with a stern irony, the self-righteousness of the questioners. He assumes that the scribes and Pharisees were really, before God, what they claimed to be before men—morally faultless or whole. Very well, in that case, they, and such as they, did not need His good services. In such society as theirs He could be only in the way. But there were others, as they themselves knew and said, who were not so happily circumstanced—others whom He calls the sick. With them He might be of service. “They that are whole,” He said, “need not a physician, but they that are sick.” If the scribes and Pharisees were whole, they could not complain of being neglected by one whose assistance they did not need—who was needed by others.

And with this tacit rebuke He explains. He is not, He says, a master of the social courtesies; He is a physician. A physician. He chooses the noblest of all the secular callings—noblest alike in its intellectual elevation, and, as a rule, in its moral disinterestedness—to describe His own work for souls. As a physician, His business was not to admire and congratulate the healthy, but to aid and relieve the sick. He, then, was in His proper place at the feast of Levi, where He was confessedly surrounded by moral disease, owning itself to be such, in all its forms. He had come not to call the righteous—the real or imaginary righteous—but sinners who yearned to escape from sin, to the bliss and strength of a real repentance.

Now, the question which was asked by the scribes and Pharisees is very instructive, for the answer to it illustrates the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in His work and person. It accounts for much in the action of the Christian Church which has seemed constantly to require explanation, and it furnishes a practical rule of conduct in a difficult department of duty for individual Christians.

CHRIST FEASTING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

The answer to the question of the scribes and Pharisees set forth the glory of our Divine Saviour. Why was He at all at the feast of Matthew? Because He was and is the Friend of sinners. "I came to call sinners to repentance." "The Friend of sinners." Here, brethren, I say, we have one of the most glorious titles of our Lord and Saviour; not merely because, being such as we are, we naturally fix our eyes upon those qualities in Him which meet most directly and consolingly the case of our own fallen and wounded nature; not chiefly because, in ancient words, our wants are the real measure of our enthusiasms; but because God's condescensions reveal His glory even more completely than it is revealed by His magnificence. The magnificence of God is altogether beyond us. By His condescension He places Himself within our powers of, in some degree, understanding Him. His condescension is the visible measure of His love. The glory of the love of God would never have been brought close to the imaginations and the hearts of men, had His love remained, for the human understanding, only an abstract attribute, instead of a force, as it is, of which man can take some sort of measure at the cradle of Bethlehem, and at the cross of Calvary.

And if men stumble at the condescension of God even more than at His majesty, it is because His condescension reveals more of His nature; it is because brighter light provokes fiercer opposition, where there is opposition at all. Yes, as the friend of sinners, Jesus Christ shows forth more of His eternal splendour than as the King of heaven. The latter is eternal love, but quiescent, inaccessible. The former is eternal love, flashing forth into activity, compelling us, in some sort, to understand, even when we have not yet the grace to worship it. Some centuries ago, there was a great controversy in Christendom as to whether our Lord would have taken our nature upon Him if man had never fallen into sin. He would not have died, of course, in that case: that was agreed, because death is sin's penalty, and Christ dies only as bearing not His own sins, but ours, in His own body on the tree. But would He have appeared in a sinless world, clothed in a human form, to establish a reign which death would not interrupt, or to pass away by an ascension which would contrast with no preceding humiliation or pain? Such a question, of course, could not be really answered. To discuss what would have been, if the world had been other than that which God knew that it would be, even before He created it—from all eternity—might seem to be an irreverent waste of time. And yet this discussion did great good, by bringing out into full and sharp relief the actual end of the incarnation of Christ in a world of sinners. Holy Scripture constantly connects our Lord's coming into the world with the salvation of sinners, just as the creed says that, "for us men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven." He Himself proclaimed that He was come "to seek and to save that which was lost"; that He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." His Apostle explains that, "because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, Christ Himself, also took part in the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And, therefore, "this is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"The Friend of sinners." He is much else. "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He is the Source of wisdom; He is the Source of strength and of sanctity; He is the Model of all the perfections; He is the Head of principalities and powers. But His glory is greater—greater than that of the sage who enlightens the understanding, but leaves the heart untouched,—greater than that of the master, though he were omnipotent, who crushes wills into submission—who can never command the homage of hearts. Jesus Christ sat down side by side with the outcast and the profligate, precisely because He was incarnate love. If He would win them, He must not keep them at arms' length. He had, by taking flesh, put Himself under human conditions of exerting influence; and, of these, voice, look, gesture, the felt presence of affection, of earnest conviction, of disinterested

anxiety, are the conditions or the accompaniments. It was as the Friend of sinners that Jesus was present at the feast of Levi. It is as the Friend of sinners that He haunts the consciences of those who, at this moment, are even defying Him,—that He pours into the wounds of the penitent the wine and the oil of His Divine consolations,—that He lightens up, with a brightness all their own, the prayers and the lives of those who have wandered even farthest from His fold. This—this is His glory to the end of time. Be Thou ruler, O eternal Saviour, even in the midst of Thine enemies, by Thy invincible love!

And this, the glory of His work, depends upon and illustrates another glory—the glory of His character. How is it that, glowing as He did with human sympathy. He could venture into an atmosphere of crime and pass forth unscathed? How is it that He could take sinners by the hand—nay, fold them to His breast, and yet escape the least contamination? It is because He, and He alone among any who have worn the human form, is sinless. That subtle taint which dulls the intellect, which stains the affections, which warps and enfeebles the will—that selfish aversion from the source and standard of all good, which sometimes expresses itself in high-handed rebellion, and sometimes is lodged in habits of thought and feeling which so bury and disguise it away that it might seem to defy detection—had no place in Him. Criticism, the most keen-sighted and hostile, could detect no flaw in His speech and action. “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” And His sanctity was not merely externally complete for defensive purposes: it was solid; it was real within. It was a thing, not of outward correspondence with rule, but of inward obedience with principle. In Him was no sin. No secret wandering of affection, no insurgent desire, no wanton love of paradox, afforded the enemy an opportunity. Temptations fell on Him, thick and importunate, but they glided away from His pure human soul, as arrows from a surface of polished steel. There was nothing within Him on which the tempter could fasten; and, accordingly, He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” This was the prerogative glory of His character among men, and it enabled Him, like a warrior whom some unseen protecting power guards, in the thick of the fight, from the bullets and the swords that play around Him, to plunge, in his boundless charity, into the haunts of sin, “to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace.” He could—He can—afford to be the Friend of sinners. Purity is fearless where mere respectability is timid,—where it is frightened at the whisperings of evil tongues,—where it is frightened at the consciousness of inward weakness, if indeed it be only weakness. It was the glory of Christ, as the sinless Friend of sinners, which made Him eat and drink as He did, to the scandal of the Pharisees, in the house of Levi.

And the answer to the question of the scribes and Pharisees is a comment on the action and history of the Church of Christ. Of her, too, the complaint has been made, age after age, by contemporary Pharisaism,—sometimes in ignorance, sometimes in malice,—“How is it that she eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?” There has been much in the history and ways of the Christian Church to make the question a natural one. Like her Lord, the Church of Christ has entered into the life of sinful humanity. As soon as the first days of persecution were over, and Christianity became the faith of the civilised world, the Church sat down with publicans and sinners at the great feast of life, to do what she could for them. She allied herself with the civil power. True, the civil power, even after it had acknowledged the name of Christ, was often enough unchristian, violent, tyrannical, unjust. Still she would do what she could for it; and, if she placed the cross of Christ on the diadem of the Cæsar, it was with the object and in the spirit of her Master’s gracious presence at the feast of Capernaum. If government was ever to be penetrated by Christian principles,—if legislation was to be baptised in the name of Christ, the Church must not hold aloof. She must do what she could, by her presence, to influence it. And, in the same way, she took part in literature and art. For centuries, these had been, more or less entirely, in the hands of the evil one. The genius, the taste, the imagination of the world had,

with some noble exceptions, told simply in the direction of human degradation. The Church of Christ set herself down at the feast of literature to purify it, to elevate it, to breathe into it the higher intelligence, the charity, the veracity, the purity, of her Lord. And art, which had been for so long the slave of sense—art was also to be transfigured by her divine companionship. She sat down to feast with its representatives that she might turn their gaze from earth to heaven,—turn it to the supersensuous and to the ideal; and thus architecture, and sculpture, and painting, and music, and poetry, became her handmaids. She won back these vast districts of human interest and human life from the service of Satan. She bade them guide the imaginations and the hearts of men from earth to heaven. And so in many other departments of human life, on all the occasions when natural feeling makes a feast for friends and neighbours, the Christian Church has entered with her kindly presence and blessing, that she might purify and elevate that which, else, might have belonged to a world estranged from God.

Has the Church, too, like her Lord, never taken harm in this work of charity? Has it sat down all these centuries with the publicans and sinners, and remained ever the immaculate bride, inaccessible to temptation, undefiled, unscathed? We cannot say it. Between the Church and her Lord there is a striking correspondence; there is also a striking difference. Like Him, she represents a higher existence amid the things of sense and time. But, while He is sinless, high removed in His awful sanctity above the reach of temptation, the Church, though holy by virtue of His presence, is yet made up of sinful human beings who have no absolute insurance against damage from contact with sin; and thus it has often happened that she has suffered from her intimate contact with the life of humanity. The ally of powerful earthly governments, she has sometimes held her peace when she should have pleaded the cause of the poor and needy—the cause of humanity and justice. The patroness of art and literature, she has sometimes seemed, though it were for a moment, to have forgotten those eternal truths which have a first claim upon her sympathies. She has postponed religious interests to æsthetic finish, or to intellectual brilliancy. The friend of man in all the joys and sorrows of this passing life, she has sometimes thrown herself into the successive phases of his existence in such sort and on such terms as to fail to sanctify them. Her annals abound with names which show that, like Delilah, the world has more than once shorn the locks of Samson, and given him into the hands of the Philistines; and thus, by a natural reaction, her best and holiest sons have sorrowed, with St. Bernard, at being compelled to dwell in Mesech, and to have their habitations among the tents of Kedar. They have longed for the wings of a dove, that they might get them away, far off, and remain in the wilderness. This must be admitted; and yet the lesson to which it points is not that the Christian Church should withdraw altogether from the feast of Levi. It is that she should husband and consecrate her forces, by new supplies from heaven, to be really of service there. She dares not leave human life, human thought, literature, government, domestic concerns, to themselves, as if her Lord and Master had not a word to say concerning these. Is she not here to witness for Him? Is she not the leaven, of which He Himself spake, as put into the three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened? The idea of a hermit Church—of a Church made up of recluses, such as Donatists—such as some Puritans—have imagined, involves nothing less than a sacrifice of the whole plan of Jesus Christ for the regeneration of the world. Still must the Church do what she may for the blessing and improvement of all departments of human activity and life. Duty is no less duty because it is dangerous. Precautions and safeguards are near at hand, but she may not cease to eat and drink with publicans and sinners.

And, lastly, these words are not without suggestiveness as to the duty and conduct of private Christians. On what terms, my brethren, ought a Christian to consort with those who openly deny the truth of religion, or who live in flagrant violation of its precepts? This is one of those practical questions which meet serious men in their daily lives, and there are two dangers to guard

against. On the one hand, we must try to keep clear of Pharisaism—that rank weed which so soon springs up in the souls of those who are trying to serve God. The interval between “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are,” is not, practically speaking, a very wide interval, and Pharisaism shows itself by social excommunications—by narrow and ungenerous prejudices—by a tacit assumption of moral superiority, which is only too common among people who are, generally, trying to lead, by God’s grace, Christian lives. On the other hand, we have to guard against an appearance or affectation of indifference to the known will of God, whether in matters of faith or in conduct. To no Christian can it be other than the most solemn of all considerations, whether those around are living conformably to the divine will so far as they know and can. No responsibility can well be greater than that of encouraging others in disobedience to the known will of God. And when this is the plain result of social intercourse, such intercourse becomes at once sinful. St. Paul asked the Corinthians with respect to the effect of intercourse on conduct, “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” And St. John, writing his Second Epistle to the elect lady and her children, about the effect of social intercourse on faith, says, “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” These passages, brethren, are not very popular in the present day, but there they are, in the New Testament. And the question is, How are we to obey them without falling into the sin of Pharisaism? The answer seems to be supplied by our Lord’s own example at the feast given by Matthew the publican. What was his motive in being there? He tells us himself. He was there simply as a physician to heal the sick. He was there as a prophet to call sinners to repentance. He did not go only because He was asked, out of easy good humour, and prepared to say nothing that would be unacceptable to the publicans and sinners. He went because He desired to do them good—because He knew that He could do it; and this, allowing for the necessary variations in the situation, should be the Christian’s rule. If a Christian sees no opportunity of doing anything for the cause of his Lord, he had better keep away from the feast of Matthew. If the society which invites his presence is brilliant and sceptical, and he knows that he cannot hope even to hold his own with the minds which shape and rule its intellectual tendencies, then he is better away. If it is morally vicious, and he is conscious of weakness of will or secret sympathy with evil, and cannot reasonably hope to stem the impetuous social torrent, then, again, he is better away. It is not charity—it is rashness—it is folly—if, indeed, it be not rather a teacherous indifference to the truth which has come from heaven—to voluntarily expose our own souls to risks which are palpable and overwhelming, when no good can be done for the souls of others. But if he can hope, ever so little, that some good may be done, then no social prejudices—then no class opinion—ought to hold him back. The frontier of Christian intercourse cannot be fixed by our social conventionalisms. Society mutters, “Take care of your character for respectability.” A Christian thinks of the presence of Christ at the feast of Matthew. A Christian knows that the difference between men is often much less than it seems to be,—that, when the difference of opportunities is taken into account, it is often, where it seems to be greatest, very insignificant indeed. Who is the Christian, that he should think meanly of such and such a sceptic—of such a profligate, as if, but for God’s grace, he would have been any better himself? Nay, may he not have even something to learn from the children of undisciplined nature—natural virtues, generous impulses, stray bits of the will of God which have escaped him, or which he has forgotten? Nature without grace may be—she is—in ruins; but her ruins are often enough beautiful and suggestive.

Great need, indeed, is there of the help of God for those Christians who, in this matter, would really follow in the steps of Christ. We can pretend, my

CHRIST FEASTING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

brethren, to no sinless nature; we cannot ensure the loyalty either of our understandings or of our wills to God's truth. But His grace is sufficient for us: His strength is made perfect in our weakness which admits its necessity. The presence of Jesus at the feast of Levi reminds us that all intercourse between one human being and another is solemn,—only less solemn than the intercourse of your soul with the everlasting God. Beneath the fixed social forms—beneath the wonted trivialities—beneath the measured expressions of sympathy and disagreement which govern our social intercourse, there are currents of thought and feeling flowing from soul to soul, for good or for ill, moulding characters this way or that, for an endless future. Nobody who thinks what social intercourse is can doubt this. No one who keeps this in his mind can deny its importance in the view of eternity. Let us endeavour, when we are thrown with others, be they who they may, to think of our Lord Jesus Christ, present, in His majesty and His love, at the feast of Levi, and pray Him for His gracious and ready help, that we, too, sinners though we be, may speak a word in season to him that is weary, and may, in this and all else, so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal.

THE HUNGRY ENTERTAINED, AND THE RICH DISMISSED.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

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"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away."
—LUKE i. 53.

MOST of us, my brethren, will be familiar with these words, occurring as they do in the great hymn of the Incarnation—that song of the blessed Virgin Mary—which is a chief feature in the daily Evening Service of the Church. But familiar words are apt to pass unnoticed, or through frequent repetition to lose their edge: and the lesson which is here conveyed is far too important to be forgotten or to be slurred over with impunity. Mary, the mother of our Divine Lord, has, as she sings, two classes of persons before her—the hungry and the rich. She employs these words, in accordance with the established usage of the Jewish scriptures, not in their literal and secular, but in their spiritual meaning. There was, indeed, a large population in Judæa at the time which was very poor, and must have been often literally hungry. We know how, when some of these became converts to Christ at a later date, St. Paul made special efforts on behalf of the poor saints which were at Jerusalem. But, when Mary sang, their hunger was unrelieved, and the wealthy Israelites of the day, too, were in full possession of their riches, and continued to be so until some seventy years later at the destruction of Jerusalem. But the prophet Amos had foretold a famine in the land,—not a famine of thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord; and the common language about hunger and riches was spiritualised naturally in a similar fashion. By the hungry Mary here means those who have a sense of spiritual need,—those who are dissatisfied at their present attainments in the mastery of truth, or in practical obedience to the will of God,—those who are looking for something beyond themselves—something better than they have or they are as yet. And by the rich Mary means those who believe themselves to be just what

they should be,—those who are conscious of no want, and who regard the suggestion that there is room in them yet for more truth and more goodness as of the nature of an impertinence. She means, in short, the self-satisfied. And then she describes the award which God makes, and which He ever will make, to these two classes respectively. “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.” To be humble, to be dissatisfied with self, to be conscious of shortcomings and imperfections, is to be on the road to improvement. God helps those who know and own that they need His help. To be satisfied with self, to be unconscious of shortcomings, to be jealous of the suggestion that all is not as it should be, is to be incapable of improvement. God will not help those who have made up their minds that they can do without Him.

Now, when Mary announces the reward of spiritual hunger and the punishment of spiritual satisfaction with self, she touches upon a principle of very wide range, applicable to the needs of mental, of moral, of physical, life. If a living being is to benefit by nourishment, whether in body, mind, or spirit, that being must welcome its nourishment by active desire—by appetite. This is plain enough in the life of the body. Food, we all know, as a rule, benefits neither man nor beast unless there be relish or appetite for it. Appetite is nature’s way of proclaiming want. Where there is no appetite there either is no need of food, or no power of digesting it; and, when nature is weary or worn out, medical skill devotes itself to create appetite as a condition of such use of nourishment as shall reinvigorate health. Nothing is more repulsive to nature than the forcible infliction of food for which the enfeebled and reluctant patient feels no sort of desire. Food may, indeed, be conveyed by a violent mechanical effort into the system of the patient, so as to prevent utter collapse: but it does not nourish; it does not invigorate. It is, at best, a burden and an embarrassment. It is lodged in the system which has received it as an inert mass, congesting the organs which it ought to strengthen, and enhancing the languor of a constitution which it should endow with new vigour and energy. Everybody knows what a complete and enduring loss of appetite means. It means that a primal condition of physical life has already been forfeited.

So, again, with mental life, whether in a man or in a child. If knowledge is to do good,—if the mind is to digest and to make knowledge its own, then there must be a desire or appetite for it. To pack a mind full of facts by a system of force or terror, where no interest whatever is felt as to the value of these facts or their relation to other facts, is only to make the learner achieve a certain transient feat in the province of memory. The facts are piled up like packages in a carrier’s road waggon, till the end of the journey; and when the lesson is said they are taken out, and the mind is much as if it had never held them. And hence the first duty of a good teacher is not to inflict knowledge upon his pupils,—not to see that a certain quantity of knowledge has been accumulated within a given space of time, but to create an appetite for knowledge, or as we say an “interest.” Interest is to mental life just what appetite is to bodily; and the production and encouragement and guidance of interest is the great aim of a teacher, in any department of knowledge, who knows his work. Many clever and highly educated men are quite unable to create it; that is to say, they are bad teachers. Until it is created, the mind is incapable of receiving to any good purpose. There is no sort of advantage in the near neighbourhood of knowledge which is not taken in,—very little in the reception of facts which are not understood or digested. A man who believes that he has nothing to learn, and a man who has no interest that would make him learn any-

thing, are practically in much the same case. If a mind have no thirst or appetite for knowledge, it will be sent empty away from the choicest library—from the most gifted of teachers. Nothing can compensate for the absence of intellectual appetite.

And this is also true of the spiritual world. What food is to the body—what useful information or speculative thought is to the mind of man—that religious truth and the supernatural grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are to man's highest nature,—to his undying personality,—to his spirit. Religious truth and Divine grace are the proper food of the human spirit; but, if they are to strengthen and refresh it, they too must be longed for,—must be welcomed by appetite—such appetite as is possible for spiritual essences to feel—such appetite as that of which the Psalmist sings,—"Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God." Religious truth forced upon a soul which has no desire for it does not illuminate: it only provokes a secret or avowed hostility. The grace of God—that is to say, no mere inoperative or barren favour, but the living spiritual energy which flows forth from Him and which unites the soul of man to Him—even this does not quicken a responsible moral being in whom there is no active yearning for the gifts of heaven. It only benumbs and warps. In short, the soul must desire God as its true life, its true force, if God is to enlighten and strengthen it. Without this desire He will do nothing for it. It will be sent empty away.

To this, as to other rules, there are, of course, one or two real or apparent exceptions. Thus, in extreme illness, the life of a patient may be saved by taking something for which he feels the utmost repulsion, and which is forcibly administered to him. In other words, life may be prolonged when it is incapable of being healthily nourished. Again, a boy who hates his books may be forced by a schoolmaster once and again to learn some few facts which will be useful to him in after life. But then this kind of acquisition is a very different thing indeed from anything that deserves the name of education. Again, infants are by baptism made members of Christ, not merely without desiring it, but without knowing it; but this is analogous to the original gift of natural life—a pure act of bounty on the part of the Creator, which precedes all else. Exceptions like this do but prove the rule, and the rule is that appetite is a needful condition of deriving benefit from that which is received, either by body, mind, or spirit. The rule is that the hungry are filled with good things, while the rich, or those who presume themselves to be so, are sent empty away.

Now, this is implied in all those passages of the Bible which make a man's reception to any real purpose of religious truth and grace depend upon his earnestness in seeking it. Thus Solomon,—“If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding,—if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” And to the same effect is the promise, “They that seek Me early shall find Me,” and “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” and the protestation, “O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee: my flesh also longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land where no water is. Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness, that I may behold Thy power and glory.” And so our Lord's fourth beatitude,—“Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled,” and His solemn caution, “Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall be hungry,” and His warning to the angel of the Church of Laodicea, “Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and lame, I

counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and to anoint thy eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see." Holy Scripture is full of the fact that the soul of man must own its need of God—must seek God, if it is to find and to possess Him,—that the one fatal bar to spiritual growth is self-complacency on the score of actual attainments,—that the one condition of true spiritual enrichment and increase is a humble, earnest, persistent desire for the graces which God has to give. And this distinction between the two classes of souls or characters—the hungry and the rich—runs through religious history; and in the most distant epochs and under the most dissimilar circumstances the rule holds that the hungry are filled with good things, while the rich are sent empty away.

This, to begin with, is the real difference between Jacob and Esau. Who has not felt, when first, as a child, reading the Bible story of the patriarchs, that Esau enlists no common share of interest? Esau seemed in those days to be hardly used, and to appeal strongly to our natural, our generous sympathies. Esau, as it seemed, was retiring, simple, even affectionate. Jacob was pushing and unscrupulous. But whenever the New Testament refers to the two brothers, it announces a very different estimate. Jacob, in the Epistle to the Romans, is the child of a Divine predestination. Esau, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is the profane person who, for a morsel of meat, sold his birthright. Jacob, doubtless, had grave natural faults. Esau was not without natural excellences. But the real distinction between the brothers lay deeper than this. Jacob was looking out for something higher and better than the outward circumstances of his daily life. He was, from the first, feeling after religion—feeling after the supernatural—feeling after God. It was the religious significance of the birthright and of Isaac's blessing which attracted Jacob. Esau was facile, self-satisfied, indifferent,—not wholly blind to the temporal value of that which he forfeited—careless of its religious aspects,—not at all disposed beforehand to make efforts to secure it,—not by any means giving it a leading place in his thoughts and aims. Jacob belonged to the class of the spiritually hungry,—Esau to that of the rich. The one became the heir of the promises: the other became the ancestor of a race of wandering idolaters who were to be the scourge of civilisation for centuries to come.

Again, here is the real difference between David and Saul. Saul, like Esau, attracts us at first. His earlier history is full of characteristics which explain his empire over the heart of Israel. He was, in those early days, before all things, generous and brave; and few incidents in the Bible, as it seems to me, command the sympathy of the reader more entirely than the history of his election to the throne of Israel. And even when, in later years, he becomes suspicious and cruel,—when he is deserted by God and is the abject slave of a weird necromancing,—when, finally, his death on the mountains of Gilboa tragically and penally closes a life which darkened continuously towards the end, there is still a pathos about his fate and character to which David's ode of lamentation gives countenance, and which we cannot but feel. David, on the other hand, was undoubtedly, guilty of the very gravest crime, and a superficial view of his character might place him—in the hands of one critic, at least, it has placed him—in dangerous contrast with Saul; and yet David, throughout the sacred narrative, is the man after God's own heart, while Saul is the man who rejects God. David is at the head of the moral and religious interest of his time: Saul is at or beyond its circumference. Saul is a child of nature; David is a child of grace. And if this should seem capricious or inequitable,

and the question is asked, "What was in David which thus sets on him, in spite of his great fall, the mark of a Divine predestination?" the answer is that David was eminently, throughout his life, and not least when he was weakest—he was as we see him in his psalms—hungering and thirsting after righteousness—after God. He had, in the phrase of Scripture, a tender heart, open to all the inspirations and guidance from on high, quick to note any token of the favour or of the frown of God,—above all, dissatisfied with self, and reaching onwards and upwards towards the perfections of which he was constantly getting glimpses, and which kept him from thinking that all was with him as it should be. Saul, on the other hand, took religion as an inevitable ingredient of his public and private life, or as a force which had to be reckoned with somehow. He did not reject it, but he had no real inward inclination for it; and, accordingly, he was impatient of any scruples on the score of its demands. He thought that in case of need he might offer sacrifices as well as Samuel or anyone else,—that matters of this kind could, in short, be of no real importance; and the secret of this off-handedness was that he did not feel God and religion to be for him a personal want, as David did. Saul could have got on without it: at least he thought so, although he made the best of it now that it was there before his eyes. Saul was satisfied with himself,—with the thoughts and feelings about himself which were habitual to him. He had no yearning for something higher and better than himself, such as David had. In the language of the Magnificat, Saul belonged to the rich,—David to the hungry; and thus it is that, while David has furnished the people of God in successive centuries with words which express the very highest and deepest thoughts of the human soul in its relations to the Infinite Being, Saul, the chosen of Samuel—Saul, the Lord's anointed—ends his earthly life in the darkest of gloom and of despair.

And—not to dwell on intermediate illustrations—when Mary sang she saw around her still these two classes of characters—the hungry and the rich. The rich were the more numerous class in the days of the Incarnation. The majority of Mary's countrymen were very well indeed content with themselves in religious matters. The governing classes, the great religious sects and professions—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, the lawyers—the mass of the people, at least in Jerusalem and the great towns, who were influenced by their leaders, were of this mind. Politically, no doubt, they were very far indeed from being content. They wanted for a Messiah some great captain or statesman who should restore to them a great name and influence among the nations of the earth. They read their crude political ambitions into the most spiritual of their prophecies. The political expectations must not be confounded with religious anxiety. They did not—the mass of them—feel any sense of religious want; nor had they any suspicion that their religious condition could be really improved. Contrasted with these was a small minority to which the holy family itself, Nathanael, Simeon, Anna, and some few others, belonged, and who are described as waiting for the consolation of Israel. They were ill at ease with their present religious condition. They knew its hollowness,—its shallowness. They still discerned the true spiritual sense of the prophecies about the coming Messiah. They lived for a future, not of political triumph, but of religious renovation and salvation. And, accordingly, when Christ was born, they knew, as the mass of the Jews did not know, that that renovation and salvation had begun. On the eve of that great event, Zacharias exclaimed, "The day-star from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." The

majority in Mary's day were the rich. They were sent empty away from the stall at Bethlehem. The minority were the hungry shepherds who saw visions of angels at night,—sages who crossed the desert in search of truth,—quiet simple souls who dwelt on and who made the most of the ancient words of God ; and these were filled, one after another, with the good news of the Divine redemption. And, fifty or sixty years after this, when Jesus Christ had taught, and died, and risen from death and ascended into heaven, and was now being preached by His Apostles throughout the world, the same two classes reappear. The rich still abound in the race of Israel. The average Jew, as St. Paul, writing to the Romans, describes him with a fine irony, rests in the law, and makes his boast of God, and knows God's will, and approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. He is confident that he himself is a guide of the blind, a light of them which sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes. He needs nothing to complete his perfect satisfaction with himself. He still, as thirty years before, goes up to the temple to protest that he is not as other men, and that he complies with all the duties of his religion. And it was this fatal self-contentment, so seriously at issue with the real state of the case, which made him into the stranger and the foe that he was to the kingdom of Christ. He imagined that he kept a law which itself proclaimed that there was "none righteous, no, not one." His self-delusion was only rendered possible by his blunted moral instincts which mistook a certain mechanical conformity with outward rule for inward conformity to the demands of a sacred principle. As he knew not his real wants, he did not seek to satisfy them. Going about to establish his own righteousness, he did not submit himself to the righteousness of God. On the other hand, there was a remnant, of whom St. Paul himself was a conspicuous type, and in whose mind this whole fictitious edifice—for such it was—of a literal obedience to the law had crumbled away. St. Paul knew that, in his own strength, he could not keep the law and could not please God ; and he resolutely tore away from the face of his soul the deceptive bandages by which the Jews of his day kept up what he denounced as a mischievous delusion. To be circumcised, to be of the true blood of the patriarchs, to belong to the most religious of the sects, to have signalised his profession by persecuting the enemies of the synagogue and by conspicuous devotion to its rules—what should this avail if all was seen to be morally rotten and hollow within, the moment the light of the Divine sanctity streamed in upon the soul ? And a true righteousness, to be won by identification of the moral nature, through faith, with the sinless Christ, was there to satisfy the hunger of the soul. "If any man think that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more ; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church ; touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless." And then he adds, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." St. Paul belongs to the hungry of the hymn of Saint Mary. The Jews belong to the rich.

And so, afterwards, and even until now, when the Gospel had made its way far beyond the limits of Israel, and addressed itself to the nations of the earth, we meet with the same distinction between the rich and the

hungry among those who are in contact with it. Even heathendom was, generally, contented with itself, though, from time to time, it involuntarily betrayed the secret, irrepressible anguish of its higher minds. It hugged its very failures rather than admit that it needed a remedy. Its philosophy had described a cycle, ending in utter scepticism; yet its philosophers could not suppose that they had anything to learn about the origin and object of the universe from a despised eastern creed. Its society was threatened with ruin through the progress of vices which sapped its very life. But who was to teach virtue to the lords of the world—the officers and subjects of imperial Rome? Its own pagan religions were already discredited as fictions; but they were bound up with the vast mass of national prejudices which satisfied the instinct of national pride. That old society was obdurately rich; it was increased with goods; and when, through His servants, Jesus Christ our Lord came to it and spoke to it of heaven, while it was yet in its full splendour and coherence, it forthwith reddened its hand in the blood of His martyrs, and would have cast out His very name as evil. Only when it was approaching dissolution—only when weakness within and barbarian enemies without heralded its fall—would it consent to turn its eyes from earth to heaven, to be filled with some of those good things from the heavenly board from which in the days of its pride and splendour, it had been sent empty away.

My brethren, the words of Mary bring before us one of the most invariable and important laws of the religious life of man. If a man is to have the presence of God in his soul, he must first feel his need of God: he must be hungry. If he is well satisfied with himself, or rich, there is in him no room for God; and he will, most assuredly, in the end, be sent empty away. And here we see why it happens that persons whose religious circumstances in life are often, to all appearance, so exactly similar, yet do, as a matter of fact, turn out so very differently. Two brothers who have breathed the atmosphere of the same home are, in later life, ranged, it may be, on opposite sides of the great chasm which divides a Christian life from avowed ungodliness. Two friends and students at the university, like the apostate Emperor Julian, and Gregory or Basil of old, become, in after years, the respective champions of Christianity, on the one hand, and whatever form of thought at the time is its deadliest opponent, on the other. It seems, like the two men in the field—like the two women grinding at the mill at the last coming of our Divine Lord—the one taken and the other left—it seems a dark and impenetrable mystery; and yet, in not a few cases, the explanation is to be found in that subtle and profound difference between man and man which is referred to in the passage before us.

My brethren, God gives to every single human being a sort of provisional or preliminary endowment which creates in the soul a longing for Himself. Even when our Lord stood before the Jewish people with his startling miracles,—with His words such as never man spake,—with the play and impress of a character that was unique and incomparable, He knew and said that this alone would not exert over any human soul that decisive influence which results in conversion. The attraction from without must be responded to—must be reinforced and seconded by an attraction or yearning from within. “No man,” He said, “can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.” This drawing—this original inward impulse towards religious truth and grace—is what we commonly call preventive grace. It is that gift or grace which anticipates God’s richer and more effective gifts. It is that gift of a spiritual appetite which creates a relish for the truth and grace of the Gospel of Christ. This is that gracious favour with which, in the collect, we ask God to prevent us,

before He furthers us with His effectual help ; and it is on the use which a man makes of this original endowment that his spiritual destiny mainly turns. If he cherishes it,—if he makes the most of its guidance, it will welcome God's teaching and God's help which come, with the advancing years, through the Church of Christ, through the Bible, through the sacraments, through opportunities of prayer, public and private ; and thus gradually Christ will be formed in him. If he trifles with it,—if he sins it away,—if he would fain be rid of it, as though it were an importunate prophet, then, when religion presents herself, she will be to him, like Christ before the Jews, without form or comeliness, and having no beauty in her that he should desire her. The vast differences between man and man in later life depend upon almost unobserved—perhaps imperceptible—acts which encourage or repress spiritual hunger in early years. When we stand where two roads end, we do not see how opposite are the directions in which they respectively lead us ; and when, in early life, the character and will have received a warp in the wrong direction,—when religion, instead of exerting an attraction with which no other can compare, falls on a dull ear and a cold heart and a jaded appetite,—when this sphere of sense and time, without satisfying the soul in its better moments, yet does occupy and engross all the powers which should have led to God—thought, affection, imagination, will,—when it seems that nothing—nothing short of that last terrific surprise—will break in upon this dream of senseless satisfaction with the perishable, God often takes the matter into His own hand. In His own way He creates a hunger for Himself. This is the meaning of illness, of loss of friends, of loss of income, of blighted reputations, of literary failures and the like, when they come upon us. They are designed by our loving Father to put us out of heart with ourselves. They strip from life its tinsel ornaments : they drive us in upon our own weakness,—upwards towards our God : they provoke in the soul a hunger for something which it knows this world cannot give. And this is the beginning of a new existence. “It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes. The law of Thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver.” Like other tastes, a hunger for spiritual things is, to a great extent, within our power to encourage or repress, although at the first it is a gift of God. Like other tastes, it is strengthened by exercise : it is weakened—it is destroyed—by neglect. Since its object—God—is infinite, it is capable of all but an infinite development ; and each sincere prayer, each act of self-sacrifice offered to God, each careful communion, each resolution courageously undertaken and discharged, helps it forward. If desire is the rudder of the soul, and determines its direction, surely, blessed beyond all other tastes and inclinations is this desire which leads us to our God—to the eternal banquet of the just—to the marriage supper of the spotless Lamb. There are many forms of appetite which we can well dispense with : with this, never. There are many banquets from which, with impunity, we may be sent empty away : from this, never. We cannot afford the eternal loss of God. Let us ask Him to give us a simple strong desire to enjoy Him for ever. He will do for us what He has done for thousands before us : He will give us this hunger here and its reward hereafter.

"THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING."

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 3RD, 1876.

"Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."—2 PETER iii, 4.

THIS question, I need hardly say, is not asked by the Apostle St. Peter himself. He is only describing what would be said and thought in after-years about the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not in the last days of the world only, but at the end of the age of the Apostles, and under their very eyes, men would be found asking whether it was to be supposed that Christ would keep His promise of coming to judgment. "There shall come in the last times scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." St. Peter describes what would be thought and said, and he provides an answer which it will be our duty presently to consider.

My brethren, on most of those sacred days of the Christian year on which we do especial honour to the work of Jesus Christ our Lord, we look backward into the ages that are past and gone. This is the case on the days which are consecrated to the great acts whereby the everlasting Son of God wrought out the redemption of us lost men. Christ's incarnation, His birth, His circumcision, His presence and blessing vouchsafed at His epiphany to the heathen world, His bitter passion and death, His glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, are past events—every one of them. They have, indeed, a present—they have an eternal—force and virtue for the Church at large, and for separate souls. From what Christ has been and has done, in time, we surely learn what He is doing now. But to-day we forget the past: we almost forget the present. We strain our eyes that we may see as far as possible into the coming time: we look forward. Before us

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is an event certain to happen, inconceivably solemn, magnificent, terrible—the coming of Christ to judgment. It is the last scene of His relation to the world, but it is just as necessary as was His birth, His death, His ascension into heaven. The main difference is that these acts of His are left far behind in the centuries which had passed before we were born, and He has yet to come to judgment.

In the first days of the Christian Church men gave a very large part of their thoughts to Christ's second coming. They were constantly looking out for it. Our Lord had said a great deal about it just before His death; and when He had risen from the dead, and had left the world, it was only natural to think over and to record all that could be recalled of His words. Hence such chapters—alone in their solemnity and awe, even in the Gospels—as the twenty-fourth and the twenty-fifth of St. Matthew, those mysterious sayings, those sharp, awakening warnings, those awful descriptions, were constantly, pre-eminently, in the hearts and on the lips of the earliest Christians. And the two first letters which St. Paul ever wrote to a Christian Church—the first and second to the Thessalonians—are full of the subject of the second advent. Indeed, the Thessalonian Christians appear at one time to have lost sight of the claims of daily duty in their entire self-abandonment to this engrossing prospect; and the Apostle's main reason for writing his second letter to that Church is to correct this serious mistake. Christ, he says, will not come immediately. Many things must happen first. There must be an apostasy from the faith. There must be the appearance of a personage called the antichrist. Meanwhile, Christians must cultivate a patient waiting for Christ. They must work with quietness and eat their own bread: they must not be weary of well-doing, only because all that they do is so insignificant when compared with all that they expect.

But the years passed. First one Apostle went to his rest, and then another; and the Church of Christ came to contain numbers of men and women who had never seen an Apostle's face. Christians still got up in the morning, thinking that Christ might come before sunset. They still laid themselves down at night in the thought that before daybreak they might be summoned by the archangel to meet Him in the air. But this expectation would naturally have been less vivid, less intense, with the second generation of Christians, than it had been with the first,—less, again, with the third than it had been with the second. The first Christians, many of them, had seen the risen Christ with their bodily eyes. Those who succeeded had seen how deep was the impression which that sight of sights had made on the beholders. He, they thought, who had revisited the world so quickly from His tomb, might well be looked for, and, that after no long interval, from His throne in heaven. This, too, they thought, as well as that other judgment upon Jerusalem, would be fulfilled literally, ere the first generation had passed away. But the years passed, and He had not come, and thus this piece of the revealed will of God gradually occupied less and less of their attention—took up less room in their hearts and thoughts—than was the case formerly. In truth, as the time went on, and Christ did not come, His coming seemed less imminent, and thus Christians thought and said less about it; not that any true Christian ever, at any moment, from those days to these, ceased to believe that Christ would come. To a true faith the thought is blasphemy, for He, our Lord, has said, again and again, that He will come,—come when men do not look for Him, as a thief in the night,—come with imperial swiftness, as the lightning shineth from the east unto the west,—come with a majesty awful, immeasurable, in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, sitting on the throne of His glory,

while, behold, before Him are gathered all the nations. From the first till now His Church has said in her heart, and with her lips, “He sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty : from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” But this master conviction, always strong, retired, in those days, more and more into the background, like the memory of one whom we have loved, perchance, better than all else on earth, but who has been dead now for a great many years, although at any moment such a conviction would flash up into its full activity to welcome its Lord and King coming from heaven in His glory,—coming to earth on His errand of justice.

This is what went on in believing souls, but in those days, my brethren, as in these, there were others, besides serious believers, who interested themselves in religious questions. St. Peter saw the beginning of it. He knew what would happen only a few years after His death. “There shall come in the last time scoffers, saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

Now, here we have the language of those moods of the human soul which leads, in the end, to entire rejection of the second coming of Christ.

“Where is the promise of His coming?” See here, first of all, the language of natural impatience. To many a man, in religions as in other things, the one thing that he can not put up with is to be kept waiting. He gets angry with Almighty God when a truth is not immediately verified,—when a grace is not instantaneously given,—where a promise is not kept without delay. He gets angry with God, just as he would with an inconsiderate or neglectful servant who kept him standing at his front door, exposed to the wind and to the rain, instead of hurrying to open it at once. This was the temper of some souls at the close of the apostolic age. They had fled for refuge from the storms of heathen life, from falling fortunes, from blighted hopes, to lay hold on the hope set before them. They wanted to see, as soon as possible, with their bodily eyes, the object of their hope. Years had passed since the ascension of Christ to heaven; yet He had not come to judgment. The Apostles, those first fathers of the faith, had one after another fallen asleep; yet Christ had not come to judgment. The first generation of believers, then the second, then, perhaps, the third, had passed away; yet Christ had not come to judgment. Why this delay? Why this protracted expectation? Why these disappointed hopes? Was He—was He coming at all? Why should men wait for that which they had expected so earnestly—expected so long? Why hope almost against hope for a fulfilment of the promise of the advent?

“Where is the promise of His coming?” Here, secondly, we have the language of incipient disbelief in a supernatural event yet to come. I say, “yet to come.” It is easier to believe in that which is above nature in a distant past than at the present moment, or in a future which may be upon us at any moment. Many a man will believe in miracles eighteen hundred years ago, who would not have believed in them at the time,—who would not believe in the same miracles with the same evidence in their favour now. Certainly, this is not reasonable, but it is common enough. Men tacitly assume that all sorts of things were possible in the past, which are not possible now. “Modern life,” they say, “has somehow or other dismissed miracle. There was room enough for it probably in the by-gone times.” To men of this intellectual kind, the idea of Christ coming in the clouds of heaven to judgment—so coming as His Apostles saw Him go up into heaven—is something more than unwelcome. It offends their established way of looking at things. It confuses the past, as they conceive of it, with the

present—with the future. It puts them in the difficulty of having still to accept a kind of occurrence which they had accustomed themselves to think of as belonging only to other lands, or to other times, or to other races of men than their own. The promise of Christ's coming, in bygone ages, as now, has seemed to be in conflict with the idea that the supernatural has passed away for good, and that henceforth, only such events as can be brought within that circle of causes which we term "nature" can reasonably be expected.

"Where is the promise of His coming?" There is, thirdly, a kind of half faith, half unbelief, which receives Christ with one hand,—which repels Him with the other,—which is willing to admit much about Him, but not to admit all that He says about Himself. In this state of mind men are glad that He came to teach, to save them, to leave them an example, that they should follow His steps,—nay, to "bear their sins in His own body on the tree." "He has done all this," they say to themselves. "He has died, risen, left this world. He is seated in a distant world on a throne of glory." And, if they say out quite frankly what they feel and think, they would add that they are grateful for what He has done, but that, for the future, they wish to be left alone—left to themselves—left with their memories about Him. They would say that they hoped that He had done with the world; and their objection to the second coming is that it breaks in violently upon this hope, as showing that He is as far as possible from having done so. "Why," they complain, "should He not have finished off His work for good? Why should He haunt the race which He has blest and raised? Why should He be like an important friend who visits, not only to say what is wise, and to do what is kind, and to bestow what is acceptable, but who comes again to see whether what he has given and done and said is of real service, and is still acknowledged and remembered?"

These are the thoughts which lead up to the state of mind which St. Peter describes in the text. Natural impatience, half belief in God's action of old, disbelief in it now, finally, a secret hope that He may have left man to Himself, or more to Himself than formerly—these are the thoughts which underlie the state of mind; for to this succeeds another, in which unbelief takes definite shape and endeavours to fortify its position by argument. "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The argument upon which these scoffers (to use the Apostle's word) rely, is that such an event as the second coming of Christ is at variance with what they observe in nature and in history. The second coming is said by Christ our Lord and His Apostles to be at once sudden and and overwhelming,—sudden, like the lightning shining from the east to the west,—overwhelming, in that the earth and all that is in it shall be dissolved. The scoffers (so to call them) say that they look around them and find no precedent for such an expectation as this. "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." "On the one hand," they say, "we are told to expect a sudden and violent catastrophe. On the other, nature," so they contend, "is, and has been for ages, gradual, regular, orderly, in its processes, without break of continuity, without convulsive disturbance, without anything that is not the product of some clearly ascertained preceding cause. And human history, upon the whole, is similarly orderly, similarly regular. It, too, proceeds, like a thing of natural growth, from stage to stage, from condition to condition, the rudest civilisation melting by slow degrees into the highest,—this generation making way imperceptibly for that,—this realm, this constitution,

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for that, so that the final result is connected with all that has preceded it by a series of links, each leading on, surely, but gradually, to the next after it. "Is it conceivable," they ask, "that all this will be broken up at a moment's notice by a sudden volcanic convulsion,—that this natural world, with all its ordered life and beauty, will be resolved into chaos,—that this more marvellous world of human beings, of millions of lives, each the scene of a mysterious history, all welded together by the labours of centuries into a complex whole, will be one day ended,—ended without discussion or parley,—ended without such delay as might procure even a momentary arrest of judgment,—ended by the mere fiat of the Judge—a fiat uttered in a moment, resistless, irreversible?"

Let us place ourselves, my brethren, under St. Peter's guidance, and see how he deals with this way of looking at things in the verses which follow my text.

Now, first of all, he raises the question of fact. The objector says to him that there have been no catastrophes, and that, therefore, none are to be expected. St. Peter points to the deluge. The deluge, whatever else may be said of it, was a catastrophe both in the history of nature and in the history of man. "This," says St. Peter, "the objectors willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of the Lord the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." They were, because He made them. And yet, by these agencies which He had made, "the world that then was," proceeds the Apostle, "being overflowed with water, perished." And then He proceeds to draw His conclusion. What has been, or the like of it, may be again. "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." There may be a difference in the agency employed. Then it was water; hereafter it will be fire; but the events are of the same general character—destructive. Their purpose is of the same general character—judicial. The power which effects them is the same—omnipotent. St. Peter points to the deluge; but the deluge, although the greatest recorded catastrophe in human history, does not stand alone. All through the ages during which man has inhabited this planet and we know anything of His annals, there has been a succession of tragic occurrences, whether on the face of nature, or in the realm of human history. Holy Scripture calls these occurrences judgments; and they are judgments. The effect on a small scale, and for a race, or a generation, or a family, or a man, what the universal judgment will effect, once for all, for all the races of men. Sometimes it is the work of nature, or, to speak as Christians ought to speak, the work of God in nature. Such in the old days of the patriarchal history was the destruction of the corrupt cities of the plain—Sodom, Gomorrah, and the rest. Such in the splendid days of the Roman empire, and in a neighbourhood most favoured by the wealthy citizens of the capital of the world, was the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum. In the last century, our great grandfathers were accustomed to look upon the earthquake of Lisbon as an event of this character; and the mighty wave which, along the seaboard of Bengal, the other day swept some two hundred thousand and odd human beings into eternity, is a recent instance of nature doing what it will achieve hereafter on a yet more gigantic scale—winding up the account of a vast number of reasonable creatures with the God Who made them. It is a mere difference, you will remark, of the area or scale of the operation. The principle is the same as that of the deluge,—the same as that of the convulsions which will accompany the coming of the Son of man.

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Sometimes, again, these judgments are the work of men. Such was the destruction of the Canaanites: such was the destruction of Jerusalem: such, on a gigantic scale, was the fall of the Roman empire itself. It then seemed, in those dark times, to sober, thoughtful minds, that all that was settled and civilised in the world—all that was a guarantee for law and order, for ownership of property, and for security of life, for those ideas without the support of which society, perforce, falls back into utter barbarism—was being swept away. Such, again, was the French Revolution. It, as we all know, was a convulsion the like of which had not been seen for a thousand years. It closed one period in the history of Europe: it opened another. But when it burst upon the world not a few good people in this country thought that the end had really come.—that the signs of the second advent were already legible in the face of the day.

And what has been, St. Peter did say, and would say now, may be. What has been—on a smaller scale, if you will—may be, will be, repeated on a greater. It matters not that all looks settled and quiet. The ocean is often calmest on the very eve of the storm. The Roman empire had stood for centuries. Men believed that it would stand for ever. They spoke of Rome as “the eternal city.” But its hour came, and it fell. Our Indian subjects had gazed on the sea which washed their coasts—some of them during a long lifetime, and they would have smiled a few weeks since had they been told that it would rise one night to a height of twenty feet above the land, and would sweep everything before it. Yet the cyclone came, and all was over.

And, secondly, St. Peter grapples with the complaint that the second advent is so long delayed. It seems intolerable to men to wait month after month, year after year, century after century—to cry with the prophet of old, “O, that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down,” and to cry, as it seems, unheeded. “God”—so man secretly thinks in his folly—“God must be impatiently waiting too—waiting upon some events, some operations, which He cannot wholly control. He, too, must share something of the lassitude of disappointed expectations, hopes, fears. He, too, must desire to finish His work, and cut it short in righteousness, instead of letting year after year pass while all is incomplete.” “No,” says the Apostle, “God is not as man, and man never makes a more serious mistake than when he argues from the conditions of his own finite nature to the awful and illimitable being of his God. As God is uncircumscribed by space so He is unlimited by time. For Him time does not exist. For Him there is no past, no present, no future. He lives—lives on—in an eternal present. The sequence of events which each man and which millions of men measure in their due succession, as these events stream before one human memory, or the sum of all human experiences across the ages, are present all at once, by one single act, to the infinite mind. To Him all the events of our separate lives, all the great epochs in the history of our country, all the turning-points in the history of the world, separated from us by hundreds, by thousands, of years, are still present. God does not remember—He contemplates—them. And, in like manner, the future is before Him. All the men who are yet to live, all the events that are yet to surprise the world, all the failures and successes, all the rises and falls of men, of races, of empires, are, like the past, even now present to his mind. He does not anticipate—he contemplates—them. So it is with the flood. Some forty or fifty centuries have passed, but the event as a whole, in its minutest incidents, is spread out at this moment before the eye of God. And so it is with the second coming. However distant and we know not how distant it may be—to Him it is an already present event. He already sees it in all its awe, in all its splendour—all the indescribable bliss, all the unutterable woe, that will surround the throne of the manifested Judge. And thus there is in God no room for any such thing as expectation or weariness. The intellect which had to wait for any possible object of contemplation would be less than infinite.

And this is what St. Peter means by his earnest warning. “Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” For the infinite mind, time means nothing. There is no such thing for him as delay. For him, all that will be is. The only

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question is how and when it will be unrolled to us. True, we may have to wait, we know not how long. Centuries do not exist for the Eternal. It is in lifting our minds to Him,—it is in looking with His eye, if we may dare so to speak,—at what He has announced, that we see how foolish it is to import into our calculations about His announcements, those petty rules of measurement which we have learnt amid the things of time. The uniformity of nature, the regular course of history, the ages which have passed and which yet may pass ere Jesus Christ comes again to judgment what are these things as against the clear word and promise of Him Who works by rule, yet works ever and anon amid catastrophes,—Who tells us what He sees when He tells us of the future,—to Whom, from the necessity of His being, there is no such thing as delay?

But, thirdly, can a reason be assigned for the delay, as it seems to us, of Christ's coming to judgment?

We know that this delay is not accidental: we know that it is not enforced: we know that it is not the result of caprice. But then what is its reason? St. Peter answers this question too. He says that there is a moral purpose, highly in accordance with the revealed character of God in this delay. "God is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. He is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." As love is the motive which moved God to surround Himself with created beings who could never, as He knew, repay Him for the privilege of existence, so in love does He still linger over the work of His hands when it has forfeited all title to exist. As "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," so He would fain extend, though it were to no purpose, the priceless blessings of this redemption, so long as any soul may be redeemed. The delay is not accidental; it is not capricious; still less is it forced: it is dictated by the throbbings of the heart of God bending over the moral world in an unspeakable compassion.

And for every judgment, even the least, there is really a preceding period of preparation; that is delay. The flood did not come until the wickedness of man was great in the earth. Physically, it was the product of natural causes which were in operation long before they issued in a scene of ruin, disaster, death. Morally, it was provoked by a volume of human wickedness which just reached its height when the floodgates of heaven were opened. Jerusalem did not fall until it had slain the Just One, and had killed His saints and servants; but the causes which led to its fall, political and religious, had already been at work for a hundred years. The French Revolution, with its repudiation of the past, with its irrational passion, with its frightful tragedies, burst upon Europe suddenly enough in 1789, but for three generations at the least it had been preparing—preparing amid the splendours and the sins of the old French monarchy. It, too, like the flood—like a volcanic eruption—was a thing of regular growth. It might have been foretold almost in detail by a close observer of men and affairs. It, too, was delayed, year after year, in mercy, until at last the fountains of the deep broke up, and all that had been was engulfed in one vast whirlpool of destructive passion. So it will be—so it is—with the last great day. It will not be the first physical catastrophe—so the men of science tell us—that has changed the surface of this planet. Ages of silent evolution must precede the decisive moment which breaks up the surface of a globe by flood or by fire. It will not be the first moral catastrophe that has profoundly affected the destiny of men, though it will be, beyond all comparison, the greatest. True, it is not yet upon us, but it is surely, while I speak—surely, silently—in preparation. As the moments pass, they bring us nearer, one by one, to the second advent. As lives are lived, and then drop silently out of sight,—as actions are done or left undone, one way or the other they tend to make the last judgment more imperative, more inevitable. Each man, each nation, lives, and, by the process of living, brings it nearer. Its causes are ever accumulating new force, new urgency. The angels are ever moving about silently between earth and heaven, making the necessary dispositions; and at last their task will be achieved, and the Judge will come. One cause only delays it—the boundless love of God. Christ's coming will be sudden when it does take place. It will be the product of a lengthened preparation. "The

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vision is," yet, "for an appointed time, but in the end it shall speak, and not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it. In the end it will surely come. It will not tarry."

The answer, then, to the question of the scoffers, "Where is the promise of His coming?" is that it is just where it was when He made it. The uniformity of nature is no argument against it. The regular sequences of history are no argument against it. Nature and history do but veil God's vast unceasing preparations for the mighty future; nor does delay make it improbable, or less probable, by the mere fact of its continuance, since, for the infinite mind, there is no such thing as delay. For Him nothing is postponed where all is present. Nor need men be at a loss to account for what to them is postponement of the great judgment, if they reflect upon the love of their God—that love which created, which preserves, which has redeemed the world, and which prolongs to the utmost moment their time of trial.

It has been said—I fear too truly—that we Christians of to-day think much less of our Lord's second coming than Christians in past times. Certainly it takes up much less room in our ordinary thoughts than in the pages of our New Testaments; and, if this is the case, matters are not with us as they ought to be. They show that we live more in this, and less in the other world, than did those before us. Perhaps it shows that we live altogether in this, and in the other almost not at all.

To faith—to living faith—the second advent is as present a fact as the first. We know Who has told us that He will come again. We know that as He has been as good as His word in the days that are gone, so He will be in the coming time. To each one of us, no doubt, all will be over at the moment of death—all that can determine our place in the endless future. We know that death cannot be very distant from any of us—that it may be very near.

Death is, practically, judgment; and the thought, the preparation, which we bestow on the one catastrophe is a fair measure of our relation towards the other. But death is not all. "After death the judgment." "The day of God"—so the Apostle calls it—that day on which, in every heart, in every imagination, for bliss or for woe, He will be alone exalted—that day on which all merely human ideals of greatness, all false standards of conduct or of honour, all the shadows with which we men, in our weakness and our folly, have toyed during the years of time, will fade away and be as though they had not been—that day when, to have been true to Him according to the light which He has given us, true to those eternal laws of righteousness which He cannot change if He would, since they are rays of His very nature, true to that Divine Saviour Who, in His unspeakable compassion, has bought us with His blood, will be happiness and joy ineffable—that day may be long in coming: it may come sooner—much sooner—than we think. In any case, it rests on a sure word of promise. It will come at last. The question is, when it comes, how will it find us, all and each? Will it find us listless, unconcerned, unprepared, like the scoffers of old whom the Apostle describes; or shall we be, in Peter's burning words, "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God," by prayer, by repentance, above all through His grace, by persistent sincerity of purpose?

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S FIRST COMING.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

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"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

THESE words are admirably calculated to help us to put our thoughts into some sort of order in Advent time, when the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, clothed in our flesh, into this world of sense and time is prominently before us. Why did He come? What were the reasons—what was the main reason, at any rate—for this wonderful act of His providence? What was it that determined Him—the Uncreated and the Eternal—to leave His glory, to empty Himself of it, as St. Paul speaks, to take on Him the form of a servant, to be made in the likeness of man? No greater question than this, a Christian must feel, can possibly be raised, since it touches, on the one hand, the dearest interests of man, and, on the other, the inmost nature of God. And this question is answered in the words, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." What is it, let us ask, that makes St. Paul preface this statement by saying that it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation"? Why does he not let the words speak for themselves, as is generally his way when he is teaching us important truth, instead of calling our attention to them by recommendations like these? The answer is that the words, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," are not the Apostle's own words. He is quoting somebody else. He did not compose this saying: he was not inspired the first to utter it. He found it current in the Church of Christ, and made ready to his hand. Timothy, no doubt, was familiar enough with the saying before he received the Apostle's letter. It was a sort of proverb or maxim: it was a piece of the known will

of God put into a condensed and striking form, and then passed from mouth to mouth, and lodged first in one memory and then in another. When everything was new to the first believers in Christ, a saying like this would be of the greatest value. It would have worked, like a short creed, as a standard by which to measure half-formed, loose language on the sacred subject,—as a guide by which to order wandering, confused, uncertain thoughts—faithful to the Divine truth which it expressed—worthy of acceptance by Christians. We do not know—we never shall know—who composed it. Like many of the most beautiful things in this world, it is the work of an unknown soul. St. Paul picked it up out of the Christian language of the day, and forthwith endorsed it with his apostolic authority. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance," said he, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

And this is not the only instance of St. Paul's putting the seal of his approval upon maxims, epigrams, poems, already existing in the Church of Christ. When he quotes the words, "If a man desire the office of a bishop he desires a good work," he prefaces this quotation by remarking, "This is a true saying." When he has repeated the maxim, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come," he adds, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." He exclaims, "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; if we believe not, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Of these words, which clearly form part of an early hymn used, there can be little doubt, in the early worship of the Christian Church, St. Paul says it is a faithful saying. And there are other sayings, particularly in these epistles to Timothy and Titus—some of them apparently proverbs circulating in the Church—some of them fragments of hymns in use among the first Christians. At one season he cites the pagan poet, Epimenides, for the character of the Cretans. "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies." And then he adds, "This witness is true." In all these cases he takes a piece of existing language—takes it out of the connection in which he finds it—pledges himself for its truth, its value—stamps it with his authority—gilds it with his inspiration, just as the practised eye of the lapidary might detect a precious stone in a heap of rubbish, and then rescue and polish and set it, it may be, to take its place in the diadem of a monarch. Of the many powers which are implied in what we call the gift of inspiration, that of wise selection from existing materials is certainly not the least important. So much for the Apostle's general practice.

But why did St. Paul detect and proclaim in this particular maxim such titles to our confidence—such claims to universal acceptance as he asserts? Why should the words "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" be a "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance"?

Now, the first reason is that the saying is clearly made up of the words of our Lord Himself. On two different occasions our Lord referred to the purpose of His coming into the world, and that in terms which completely bear out the words of this saying. When the Pharisees asked His disciples why their Master ate and drank with publicans and sinners, He simply says, "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." When the men around murmured at the welcome He gave to the publican, Zaccheus, He exclaimed, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In fact, He had come into the

world, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Thus the Christian maxim only put Christ's blessed words into another and more compendious shape, and this was, no doubt, St. Paul's first reason for pressing it so strongly on Timothy's attention.

Remark, brethren, the high authority which belongs to this saying, now that we see whose it really is. Man, in his short-sightedness, can only have guessed at the purposes of the Eternal when entering into time—of the Illimitable when submitting to bonds; and these guesses would have partaken of all that liability to error which is inseparable from the judgment of fallible man. Man could only have guessed: our Lord and Saviour knew. From all eternity He was privy to the counsels of the Father, and, if He spake to men with created lips, He spake out of also the depths of the uncreated intelligence. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." And, therefore, when He tells us what was His great purpose in coming among us, He leaves no room for doubt in any soul which really trusts Him.

Men have asked the question whether He would have come among us if man had never sinned. To that question we can only say, "We do not know." What we do know is that "when He took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the virgin's womb." What we confess with heart and mouth is that, being "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, of one substance with the Father," He, "for us, men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven." This language of our creed is only an expansion of the saying commended to us by the Apostle, and both are based upon the words of Christ Himself that He came into the world to save sinners.

And a second reason for the importance of the saying lies in the light which it throws on the character of God. The temptation to cherish hard thoughts of God is very old. If antiquity could make such a temptation respectable, it would be very, very respectable indeed. And it is also very modern. It appears and reappears in some of the most recent speculations of our troubled age. "I knew thee, that thou art an austere man,"—this is the language which millions of hearts have secretly held in converse with the infinitely loving Creator. Nature and life seem at first sight—seem under certain circumstances—to justify this. Nature is wasteful; she seems to create only to destroy; she seems to produce millions of living beings who have no chance of existence, and who, being produced, must perish. And nature is not merely wasteful: she is cruel. Pain—that weird mystery which haunts the higher forms of being—pain reigns in nature with almost undisputed sway. Pain is an antecedent of life itself. The pain of one creature is a needful condition of nourishment to another. There is a hierarchy of suffering, corresponding to the hierarchy of animated beings. The strong prey on the defenceless and the weak. The last agonies of the lamb blend with the appetite and strength of the lion. And, in watching the vicissitudes of many a human life—the unrequited kindness, the unrecognised merit, the sympathy wasted upon the air and the rocks, when it might have done so much for others, the gifts bestowed upon those who cannot or will not use them, the triumph of so much that deserves to fail, the failure of so much that should command success—men are tempted to ask, "Where is the holy and all-wise Ruler of the world?"

Now, Christianity has its own way of explaining the evils of society and life; and there are, I need hardly say, numberless laws and provisions of nature itself, which point to a benevolent and moral Author and Ruler

But, still, in spite of this, these features of nature and society do sometimes take possession of the minds of men as if there were not another side to the question,—as if the face of God was really hidden by the clouds and thick darkness which gather around His works. Against all these the saying of the text, when it is once received by faith, is a faithful exponent of the truth about God, and worthy of all acceptance by human beings,—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Physical evil is the child of moral evil, and in all ways less serious than moral evil. God saw the moral evil on the face of His works. He determined that His own arm must bring the cure. No created being—no saint or angel—could supply the remedy. The everlasting Son bent from His throne, dismissed His angels, and put on Him a creature's form that in it He might obey, suffer, die. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” To those who believe in the words of Christ there is no real doubt as to the Divine character after this. The frowns of nature and the ills of life go for little against the tenderness, the unspeakable tenderness of redeeming grace. “Clouds and darkness” may, for a while, appear to be “round about Him,” but “righteousness and justice” are known to be “the habitation of His seat.” It is because the saying about this purpose of Christ's coming throws such light upon the character of God that it is so faithful and worthy of acceptance by men.

A third reason for the importance of the saying is that it reminds us of the greatness of the work of Christ. My brethren, it is of real importance to take a just view of the relative magnitude of the evils of life, as well as of the relative magnitude of our blessings. One man thinks narrow means the worst of all evils—another, the absence or the ingratitude of friends—a third, bad health—a fourth, the removal by death of those whom we love, and who make life bright to us. But, in fact, none of these evils is the greatest that can happen to us. They may be blessings: they may detach us from outward things—turn the eye of our soul inward—turn it towards our supreme, our only good. Of each of these we may have occasion to say in the eternal hereafter, “It is good for me that I have been troubled, that I might learn Thy statutes.” But there is one evil of which this can never be said. Never can a moral being say, under any circumstances, “It is good for me that I have sinned.” Physical evil, pain, want, disease, may be made to lead to moral good,—moral evil, or sin, never. It is the antagonist of moral good. So far as it exists, it makes moral good impossible. Of physical evil, an Apostle cries, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” Of moral evil, a prophet asserts, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.”

What is it—this essential evil which can never be good—never help forward good? It is nothing originally resident in nature. It is a rebellion against the Author of nature, in that one corner of nature where alone such rebellion is possible. It is the perversion of free will. The planet cannot but move in its orbit: the plant cannot but grow, and bloom, and die: the insect and the elephant must each obey the law of its kind. For these there is no discretion to be exercised as to whether they will or will not do that which their Maker meant. But man has this discretion. It is at once his dignity and his peril. God willed, in creating, to be served, not merely by beings which cannot but serve Him, but also by beings of a higher rank—by men and by angels, who render a service which it is in their power to refuse; and the refusal of such a service is sin; and sin is, therefore, in the moral world, what a planet getting out of its orbit would be in the world of nature. It is a contradiction of the rights of God, and of the best interest of men and thus it has a range of destructive effect,

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which touches man's inmost being, and which, unless it is arrested here, lasts on into another state of existence.

"The soul that sinneth it shall die,"—that is the law written in the eternal mind—written in the nature of things: for God is the Source of life and the self-determining being who abandons God turns ~~its~~ back upon the Source of life, and, since there is no intermediate or neutral sphere or state, chooses death. This choice is made here in this world. What takes place in eternity is only a prolongation or effect of what happens here. That this is no dry or abstract speculation, but the most intimate, the most practical of our experiences, all of us, my brethren, know—all of us who know anything truly about ourselves. St. Paul speaks of death working in a moral being, and the process may be watched by many of us as it goes on in ourselves. This subtle presence, which dulls the faculties within—which brings weakness and shame and disquiet in its train, as surely as it presents itself—what is it? This wasting fever—this plague, as Scripture calls it of the heart—this bitterness which the heart, the central chamber of our being, only knows—that stain which lies far out of sight, never referred to, only half recognised by the man's self, yet never obliterated, always ready to trace its outline on reviving memory—these ill suppressed memories of the half benumbed conscience which, now and then, in the dark hours of the night, will break out and sound through the recesses of the soul in a long wail of agony—what are they? This is the voice, the stain, the presence of the one real evil—the evil which being, so long as it lasts, inveterate, irreformable, can never be turned to account by good: this is the sense of discord with the true law of our being—of rebellion against the Author and End of our being: this is sin.

Now, if our Lord Jesus Christ had left this master-evil untouched, He would not have saved men, in the proper sense of that expression, whatever else He might have done for them. The salvation of man is a different thing from an improved condition of society. Christ has effected this beyond any other influence that ever has been felt by man during the whole course of his history. But, had He done no more than this, He would not have saved us. Social improvement is quite compatible with the irretrievable loss of multitudes of souls. The salvation of man is not another word for his mental improvement, though we sometimes speak as if we thought that it was. The highest enlightenment may consist with entire spiritual ruin. The light of the sun may play upon a corpse without reviving it. The salvation of man is not another term for improved outward conduct. Such improvement is, doubtless, its inevitable consequence, but such improvement may be, within limits, secured without it, from reasons of temporal expediency, of disgust with the past, of mere natural self-respect. Conduct may be improved on the surface of being, while the centre of being remains unchanged; and Christ did not come from heaven to make respectable that which He could not cure. Nor is the salvation of man even a new state of feeling. It includes this, but it is something more: it is something deeper. Feeling—religious feeling—may be superficial. We all know that the ready command of tears is by no means a sign of the tenderest heart. Feeling may be partly, largely, physical—a mere effect of natural constitution and temperament; and, under all circumstances, feeling is too much mixed up with the nerves and fibres of our bodily frames to be a safe index of our spiritual condition. No, salvation consists in a renewed will—in a will renewed by its adhesion to the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ. This begins in time: it continues into eternity. This will is the governing faculty in man.

The will is the rudder which the ship of the soul obeys in its passage across the sea of time. The will means—it is—the real nature—the better nature turning upwards towards God, or the old nature turning away from God, as the case may be. Everything else in us follows the lead of the will. The will controls, sooner or later, conduct, feeling, and, though men do not think it, even thought and outward things besides. The will is the imperial faculty by which else is guided,—on which all else in us depends. And when the will has made a complete act of adhesion to Jesus Christ, the perfect moral Being—that act which the Bible calls “faith”—then the rest follows, and man is saved.

Our Lord came to save men, by doing three things for the human will. He gave it freedom: He gave it a new and true direction: He gave it strength.

He began His work by setting it free. It was enslaved to sense, enslaved to passion, enslaved to perverted wills around. It was, as He found it, clogged and weighted by its association with a darkened conscience,—with the memories, the inheritance of sin. He removed this weight by taking it on Himself. It was, if I may reverently say so, natural that He should do this, since He, by the terms of His nature, was the representative or pattern man, and, as such, could put Himself in the place of each member of the race, and, upon occasion, act for each and transfer from each, to Himself Who represented all, what each, but for Him, must have borne alone. And thus He “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness.” He lifted from the conscience, and so from the will of man,—lifted from all human wills that desired this Divine emancipation—the burden of the ages, the burden of each separate life; and the human will was free.

And, next, He gave to the will a true direction. Since Adam’s fall, the wills of men had had a fatal warp towards what was wrong. Like machinery that has got out of gear, in consequence of some violent shock, the will still worked, but it worked awry. It could not be depended on. It was right sometimes, but then, on occasions, it broke away from control: it plunged into mischief at a critical moment when steadiness in one true line of action was before all things, needed. And, if I may say so, He reset it; he put it back upon its old true original orbit, moving round the one centre of the moral life—moving round the everlasting Being. “Ye were,” says St. Peter, addressing his flock, “Ye were as sheep gone astray: ye are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

And, thirdly, He gave to the will strength to act, and to persevere in acting freely in its new direction. He did this through grace; that is to say, not merely through an exertion on His part, of resultless favour, but through an invigorative power, or influence, streaming, by the agency of His Spirit, forth from Himself. Without this, the old mischief might soon have returned. Without this, the will again might soon have been enslaved to nature, to passion, to the created and perverted wills around it. He braced its relaxed sinews by His heavenly grace, and one of the earliest possessors of His gifts exclaimed, “I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.”

And thus Christ has saved sinners—believing sinners. First, He has pardoned them. He has made their sins His own: they are free. Next, He has put them by His grace on the true road which man should follow. He has given them strength to follow it. He completed this work by His death upon the cross; but all the institutions of His Church are intended to give effect to it in detail. Her message to the world preached

from the very first days until now, is the forgiveness of sins, the salvation of sinners through Christ. This is why we proclaim our faith in "one baptism for the remission of sins." This is why He "hath given power and commandment to His ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." This is the reason for our praying in the Communion Service that all who receive His body and blood may also receive forgiveness of their sins, and all other benefits of His passion. Indeed, as many of you, I trust, will remember, this precious saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," is one of the four selected passages of Scripture which, in our sacred service, guard, if I may so say, the approach to the altar. It reminds us, at the most solemn moments of the Christian life, of the true purpose of our Redeemer's coming among us. Then, when nothing that is trivial, nothing that is irrelevant, should occupy our thoughts, we are guided to this faithful saying, so worthy of our acceptance, so intimately bound up with the deepest, the most vital, interests of our immortal souls.

And a fourth and last reason, which may convince us of the importance of this saying, is its interest for every individual man. My brethren, we differ in all besides, we differ in age, in temperament, in means, in accomplishments, in abilities, in moral and mental characteristics. Each age of men has its peculiarities,—each country its peculiar temper and type of civilisation. Each class has its good and weak points, its elevating convictions, its unworthy prejudices. No two human characters, as no two human faces, are exactly alike; but one thing there is that unites us all; one consciousness there is in which we all, of all ages and all countries, of all classes and tempers, sooner or later, must agree; and that is that we are sinners. It is now as it was in the ages of old. David's saying is always true, "There is none righteous, no not one." St. Paul's saying is always true, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If sin is not on the surface of life, depend upon it, it is not far from the centre. If it is not prominent in the outward shape and form of action, it is the more surely to be detected somewhere near the springs of motive. If it does not inflict upon us open shame and social confusion, it may yet make us bend in secret humiliation, to which language cannot do justice, before the awful holiness of God. It is not only that the heathen and the unconverted are sinners; it is not that sin is monopolised by great criminals, by the victims of great penal calamities, by the men whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, by the men on whom the tower of Siloam fell. No; "if we," the redeemed of Christ, "say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Do not let us imagine that a renewed life makes—can make—a bad action good. On the contrary, a bad action destroys, for the time being at any rate, the renewal of the life. Only by constantly recognising sin, and begging for pardon from our merciful Redeemer, can we be safe. It is not the Pagans; it is not the Jews; it is the generations of Christendom who should take up the language of the prophet,—"All we have sinned and gone astray. We have turned every man to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

St. Paul quotes this saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and then he adds, "of whom I am chief." The last thing that occurs to him is to except himself. He is not of course speaking—he could not speak—of the absolute fact. Of that, even he, Apostle though he was, could not be informed. Only the eternal Judge would know who,

in all the generations of mankind, would be in His own unerring sight, literally the first of sinners. But in St. Paul's own estimate of sinners, he himself came first. There was—this was his firm belief—no other such sinner as he. He had done worse, at any rate, than any other man that he knew all about. He had had more light, more grace than any other that he knew. From his own point of view, this primacy amongst sinners which he claimed as his own was no half sincere, no rhetorical hyperbole ; it was the proclamation of serious, fixed conviction. He stated it as a simple truth, which humbled him to the dust, just as when he said that he was not meet to be called an Apostle,—just as when he said that he was less than the least of them all.

The estimate of self is common at all times to men who live near God, and who can see motes and flaws of character, in the rays of the Divine light which fall around them, which escape duller and earth-bound eyes. Each of these says, age after age, with perfect sincerity, "Jesus Christ came from heaven to save sinners : of these I am the chief."

Brethren, the world is old enough to have accumulated a vast number of wise sayings. They float about in books, in conversation : they are handed on, handed down from man to man, from father to son. We learn them ; we load our memories with them ; we stock our conversation with them ; we scarcely know when or how. There they are, maxims of prudence, maxims of honour, maxims for good behaviour in society, maxims for taking a just view of men and events. Each of these claims to embody some measure of wisdom. Many of them, it is true, are worthless enough, good only for repartee, only for sharp conversation, only for much which does not really help us towards the real end of our existence. We should not care to remember them if we thought that we were dying ; and it would be better for us if we could forget many of them altogether and at once. But it is not so with this saying in the text. It tells us the truth, and we do well to trust it. It brings us an offer of God's grace and love : we do well to accept it. At all times should this precious saying be pressed close to the memory, close to the heart, that it might, by God's grace, move, guide, invigorate the will, but especially as I have said, in Advent time, for now we are standing between Christ's two comings—His first in mercy, His second in judgment—the first in the manger of Bethlehem, the second in the clouds of heaven. Who shall abide the day of His second coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth ? He and he only who has made the most of the first Advent, who has borne well in heart and mind the truth that He came down from heaven in His unspeakable love to save from sin, and so to make His second coming not merely tolerable, but welcome. "We believe that He will come to be our Judge." But on this very account we do well to pray Him to help His servants, sinners as they are, whom He has redeemed with His most precious blood.

THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 17th, 1876.

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."—LUKE ii. 34.

THIS was a saying of the aged Simeon, when our Lord Jesus Christ was presented in the Temple on the occasion of His mother's purification. Simeon took the Divine Child in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." This burst of inspired song in the aged servant of God moved astonishment in Joseph, and even in Mary, although she had already, in her own *Magnificat*, from a somewhat different point of view, extolled the greatness of her son. Simeon's last words, "the glory of Thy people Israel," would have lingered in the memory of Mary and Joseph, as the last phrase of a gifted speaker often will linger on the listener's ear; but Simeon probably felt that his expressions required explanation. "The glory of Israel" was a phrase already consecrated in religious language. It commonly meant the sacred Presence or Shekinah between the cherubim over the Ark of the covenant. Israel, as St. Paul in later years pointed out, had indeed many a prerogative among the nations. Israel was God's adopted family; Israel inherited the covenants—those early understandings between earth and heaven, of which the great patriarchs had been the favoured recipients. To Israel God had revealed, in its completeness, the moral law. Israel offered to God a worship, the nature and details of which had been divinely ordered. Israel, so rich in the past, was also the people of the future.

The promises were its endowment for the coming ages, and, in the fathers or patriarchs Israel had not merely a store of precious memories, but a lasting possession. The patriarchs were the property of their descendants to the end of time; but the true glory of Israel was this,—that of its stock and blood, “as concerning the flesh, Christ,” Whose incarnation the sacred Presence over the Ark prefigured—“Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever.” All else that Israel was or had—its sacred books, its typical ritual, its ideal of righteousness in the moral law, its great saints and heroes—all else pointed on and up to this its supreme prerogative. The promised Christ was to be of the seed of David, according to the flesh; and this was fulfilled when Jesus came. “The glory of Israel.” It was a phrase well calculated to take complete possession of Jewish imaginations when referred to Him in Whom it had at length been satisfied.

But what would it mean in fact—in history? Would, then, all Israelites hasten to recognise their true title, as a race, to greatness? Would all hearts join in one outburst of thankful praise when the glory of Israel presented Himself to his countrymen? Simeon feels that it is a duty to check unwarranted expectations—expectations which his earlier words might well have encouraged. “Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary, his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.”

And thus the words of Simeon in the text seem to be intended to check natural but undue expectations about the effect of the first coming of Christ; and thus they may well help us now in the Advent time, though they are more properly associated with our Lord's presentation in the Temple. The child of Mary, the everlasting Son of the Father, is set—set by the counsels of God, set in Jewish history, in human history—“for the fall and rising again” of many a human soul.

First, let us here remark that Christ's coming into the world was not to have a uniform effect upon human souls. It would act on one soul in one way, and on another in another; it would act differently on the same soul at different periods of its history. “This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” My brethren, looking to the kindness and love of God our Saviour—looking to His boundless power and majesty—it is, perhaps, natural to think, to speak, as though, by a kind of hard and insurmountable necessity, His advent must, perforce, bring a blessing to every human being. To think thus may be natural, but it is not reasonable; it is not in accordance with what He has taught us to expect. Christ by His coming into the world does not bless everybody, though it is in His heart to do so. His good will is here limited by the free action of men. Men can, if they like, reject Him, and, in fact, they do. He is the glory of His people at large, but of the individuals who compose it many will lose, as many will gain, by His coming among them. That is the sense of Simeon's words, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.”

And this, after all, is only to say that the spiritual world is not ruled mechanically. If Christ had come down from heaven as a simply resistless influence for good, so that men, do or be they what they might, could not but be bettered by Him, the result would have been clearly mechanical,—just as mechanical as anything which is set going by steam power or by water power. And yet, even in vegetable or brute nature, some conditions are required, if the reinforcements of vital power are to be of much real use. The sun and the rain can do but

little for the tree which is sickly or withered. The greenest pasturage cannot tempt the dying hind. There must be an existing capacity for being nourished in the tree or in the animal, if there is to be improvement. And much more does this law obtain in the spiritual world; for, being a self-determining spirit, man is free: he can accept or he can reject even the highest gifts of God: he is never coerced into excellence any more than he is coerced into wickedness; he is, in the highest sense of the word, master of his destiny. The truth, the grace of God, only act upon man with good results so far as man is willing that they should so act. God has made man free. He does not withdraw this prerogative of freedom even when it is used against man's best interests,—even when it is used against Himself; and the exercise of this freedom by man to accept or to reject even his own highest good explains the difference of the results of Christ's coming upon different souls. "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

That such an event as our Lord's advent would have great, although not uniform, results was, indeed, from the nature of the case, inevitable. It acted as a moral shock upon the existing fabric of thought and life: it broke up the stagnant, fixed modes of feeling and thinking: it set men in movement: it led to anxious self-questionings, to widespread anxiety of mind, to general unsettlement: it destroyed that tranquil satisfaction with things as they were in Israel which had secured so much repose of mind to so many worthy Israelites,—to so many classes in Israel. Such an event as this would reveal, above all, the true character of the time. It would act as may a flash of lightning on the crew of a wreck: it would act as a torch carried at night over a battlefield: it would dispel illusions somewhat rudely, often at the cost of happiness and temper, and, as a result, it would be regarded in more ways than one. Those who wished to know the truth, and to live in it at all costs, would welcome it, and thank God for it. Those who did not wish this would slink away from an influence which made them uncomfortable, even though they might have reason to think that in the end it would make them better than they were.

In ordinary life there are many occurrences which in a lower sense act upon men in different ways,—which bring out unsuspected tendencies for good or for evil. Thus it has been remarked that a railway accident, or a fire, or the outbreak of an epidemic, or the sudden inheritance of a fortune, are each in their way revelations of character. They break through the ordinary habits of thought and language: they surprise men for the moment into being perfectly natural. They reveal, they develop, unexpected beauties in this man's character—heroism, generosity, disinterestedness; or they bring unimagined weaknesses to the surface in that man. They start leaks, so to speak, where there is not sufficient moral strength to bear the pressure of new events: they show that men are selfish or cowardly, or in other ways unlike what they were supposed to be. In the same way, a great controversy or quarrel about some question of duty in the family, in the Church, in the country, acts as a solvent upon all sorts of persons. It throws them back upon the principles which really rule them: it precipitates a great deal in them which else might have remained undecided: it forces them to take a side, and, by taking a side, to make a revelation—a revelation of character.

And much more is this the case when men are brought into contact with the mind and heart of unwonted greatness. Many of us can remember something of the sort happening to us at some period of our lives. We saw, perhaps,

a person whom we shall never forget, and the event was one of a kind to have made us from that time better or worse. Such a personality is too imperative to leave other men just as they were : such a personality sets feeling, thought, will, all in motion—not always in friendly motion—towards itself,—not unfrequently in hostile—in prejudiced motion.

And this was especially the case with our Lord Jesus Christ when He appeared. Men could not, if they would, regard Him with indifference. They could not escape from some sort of profound emotion at coming into contact with Him. When He made His entry into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" And this was a sort of concrete representation of what took place on a vast historical scale on His entrance into the world—into history. That momentous event produced a varied and prolonged emotion in human souls. It stirred the lowest instincts, as well as the highest thoughts of men. It was a fulfilment of that pregnant saying, "Yet once more do I shake, not the earth only, but also heaven." But its result was not—could not be—uniform. It was for the rising or the fall of many a human soul.

And, secondly, of the two effects of Christ's advent, Simeon mentions—and it is a point carefully to be noted—as first in order, the fall of many in Israel. It must strike us as bold to the very verge of paradox thus to associate His blessed name, Who came to be the help and Saviour of men; with spiritual failure. And yet this language was in keeping with what prophecy might have led men to expect. Isaiah had said that the Lord Himself would be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," to both the houses of Israel; and this was shown to be the case again and again through the centuries of Israel's history. The worst faults of this people were occasioned by the misuse of privileges and opportunities designed to lead them up to God. Their table was made "a snare to take themselves withal." The things which should have been for their wealth became to them an occasion of falling. The despised prophets, the neglected sacrifices, the forgotten law—all these were steps in their downward course. What would happen when the greatest of all God's gifts was bestowed on them? What would happen when He gave His best and choicest,—when, after sending prophet after prophet, He said at length, in the fulness of time, "They will reverence My Son?"

The prediction of Simeon was fulfilled, even when our Lord appeared as a public teacher. "He was despised and rejected of men," by the great majority of the Jewish people. The learned classes, the scribes, would have nothing to say to Him. The so-called religious public, the Pharisees, would have nothing to say to Him. The political religionists, the Herodians—they would have nothing to say to Him. The common people heard Him gladly in the early days of His ministry; but the time came when they, too, cried out, "Let Him be crucified." Only a few predestined souls—Peter, John, Mary Magdalene—these clung to Him. Others came very near: the great body fell away.

St. Paul reviews the whole of the case in after years, when he writes to the Romans. Israel, as a whole, he admits, has fallen. Only a remnant was now left—left as of old, as in the days of Elijah. As for the majority, they were weighed down by a spirit of slumber: they had eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.

Now, what was the kind of fall which Christ thus occasioned to the majority of the Jewish people. It was not a fall from the profession of the religion

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of Moses. On the contrary, the Jews pleaded the profession of this religion as a reason for rejecting the claims of Christ. Nor was it a fall from morality. There was no great deterioration on this score in the generation which rejected Christ. To all appearance they remained what they had been. They resisted innovation—innovation as proclaimed by Christ and His disciples. They said that they had Abraham for their father—that they had the law of Moses for their rule of life—that they had the prophets to warn, to stimulate, to instruct them—that they had the Temple, with its Divinely ordered ordinances, in which to worship. In clinging to these at all costs—in resisting all teaching which implied that these were not enough—how could they fall? Failure, apostacy, to a Jew, would have appeared to be looked for elsewhere among those who gave up their old religion and who adopted a new one. Their failure, my brethren, lay in falling away from the Christ when He had presented Himself to them. And why was this a falling away at all? Why was it not rather steadfastness to old convictions which deserved to be spoken of in very different terms? The answer is, because Jesus Christ was the true end and explanation of all Jewish history. Everything in that history pointed on to Him. He was the subject of the promises made to the patriarchs: He was the significance of the ritual prescribed by the law: He was the deliverer announced in the most various terms by successive prophets: He was the true outcome of the theocratic people, the people of religion, the people which, from age to age, had before its eyes an ideal of righteousness. And, therefore, to reject Him was to reject itself—to fall from all that its past implied—to fall from the guidance which God had vouchsafed to it during successive centuries.

And He was not the less surely rejected by the misplaced religious narrowness which would not listen to what he had to say, and took shelter under an appeal to the law and the prophets, and the old customs, and the ruling prejudices of the time. Israel, in rejecting him, seemed to itself to be holding its own: in reality, it fell away from the spirit and substance of all that it clung to. This is a point which should be noticed carefully. A nation, a Church, a man, may fall from truth, fall from right, fall from God, not by any visible change, or movement, or catastrophe, but by simple, dogged refusal to go forward—to go forward in the path of improvement at the bidding of conscience and of heaven. One truth leads a man on to another, and to reject the second truth is implicitly to discredit the truth which implies it. One duty suggests another; and to decline the second is to weaken the obligation of the first. When the Jews had rejected Christ, they had really—little as they thought it—they had really discredited the revelation of Moses and the authority of the prophets. They could only cling to these by shutting their eyes to the spirit and drift of these sacred writings—by making the most of the mere letter. They had really fallen while they seemed to be exactly where and what they had been. Of falls from failure to go forward at the bidding of Christ, the rich man who came to Him is a leading instance. The moral sense of this young man had drawn him to the feet of the Redeemer. He instinctively felt that there was a teacher who could speak at least with that sort of authority which comes with goodness. He wished to be conscious of the entire approval of a master like this, and so he voluntarily submitted himself to an examination. He had kept the great commandments of the law: he thought that all was well with him. "What lack I yet?" he said; and when our Lord laid on him the counsel to sell what he had, and give to the poor, and, "Come, follow me," he turned away sorrowful, for

he had great possessions. He fell, not from the outward type of his former life, but from the line of spiritual progress along which, up to that time, he was advancing.

Brethren, a fall like this looks better to the eye than it really is. Nothing is changed—at least immediately—in the bearing and habits of man's outward life. The form of godliness, if it existed before, and as it existed before, continues, at any rate, for a time; but such a life as this is like a plant whose root has just been eaten out by a worm: the vital principle of growth is surely destroyed when a divine call to advance has been knowingly and wilfully set aside.

Somewhat different is the case of a fall like that of Judas. Judas was already one of the chosen twelve; yet he was also, in our Lord's words, "a devil." Judas fell through one besetting sin—covetousness; but this, which might have worked only ordinary havoc on another theatre of events, was, in that sacred presence, nothing less than irretrievable ruin, for the presence of Jesus Christ incarnate was like the moral law. It stimulated the opposition of latent evil towards itself. Judas was irritated into treason by the tranquil, the unassailable holiness with which he kept company day by day. But Judas fell, not merely from what he might have been, but from what he had been. It would have been better for such a one not to have known the way of life: it would have been good for him if he had never been born. Assuredly, brethren, religion does not save us men by the mere fact of our being brought into close contact with it. Those who have known most about it in early youth, the sons of religious parents, sometimes in after life turn out its worst enemies, and they seem so speak to the world with authority—the high authority of experience—when they show that they have tried and found it wanting. They are like soldiers who, after making themselves acquainted with their general's resources and position, go over to the enemy and place their knowledge at his disposal. This sad sight, as many must know, has been repeated in not a few instances in this and the last generation. Christ is set in the firmament of the spiritual heavens for the fall of these unhappy souls. He is to them a "savour of death unto death." He is ever in Himself loving and merciful, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" but in all generations there are men over whom He says in sorrow, "If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin."

And, thirdly, Christ was also set for the rising of many in Israel. This was His original purpose in coming among us—a purpose which was only limited in its operation by the free but perverted will of man. When He, our Lord, had His own way with souls, it was to raise them to newness of life. He did not merely promote this resurrection in man. He was himself—so He said—"the resurrection." "I am the resurrection and the life." To come into contact with Him was to touch a life so intrinsically buoyant and vigorous that it transfused itself forthwith into the attracted soul, and bore it onwards and upwards. "Risen with Christ" is an expression applied by St. Paul to Christians on this side the grave; and the rising of many in Israel, of which Simeon spoke, was not the future resurrection of their bodies, but the present moral and spiritual resurrection of their souls. Something like this power is felt—but felt, of course, at an infinitely remote distance—in the case of any eminently good man. Good men do, by their mere presence, by their looks, by their words, by their unconscious ways, draw those of us who are privileged to be with them upwards towards that world in which they habitually live. In our Lord's case,

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while He was on earth, this power which went out of Him was unlike any witnessed before or since, and He exerts it still, though over the invisible world, and through agencies which appeal less powerfully to the imagination, or, rather, to the senses.

The Gospel tells us of several for whose rising again Christ was set. It was true of each disciple that persevered: it was conspicuously true of the poor Magdalene whom He rescued from the grasp of seven devils: it was true of Peter who denied Him,—true of Thomas who would not for a while believe His word. But in none of His servants is this attractive power of the Redeemer, mighty to raise from sin and from death, more gloriously displayed than in St. Paul. St. Paul had fallen, so as to be, in his own estimate, the very chief of sinners. He had been, he says, a blasphemer and a persecutor. He was not, he felt, even in later years, when he had worked so long, when he had suffered so much, worthy to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God. But if Christ had provoked him at the first to a bitter hostility, the time came when he, by His controlling grace, inspired His poor servant with a passionate affection, which controlled and absorbed all the faculties of his being. The point at which this great change took place is called his conversion. In Simeon's language, it was his rising again after his fall; and thus in his own person St. Paul experienced this double effect of the advent of Christ into the world—first, the repulsion which made him so bitter a persecutor, and next the attraction which made him so glorious an apostle,—first, the fall, and then, the moral resurrection.

All this double experience of St. Paul has been repeated since. Augustine was a second great example of it. And it is a happiness to think that many men in our modern world, who are thinking and speaking and living in opposition to the eternal Christ, may be in the case of Paul,—in the case of Augustine. In their earlier days they have, from whatever cause, taken fright at religion. They have been repelled by some caricature of it, by some inconsistency on the part of some of its professors, or by taking only one aspect of its doctrines and claims into consideration, or by a sense of their present inability to comply with its demands upon the conscience and upon the heart. But Christ is still there in the firmament of the heavens, in the midst of the Church, among the golden candlesticks, set, not merely for the fall, but for the rising again of many a soul in Israel. It is to be hoped that brighter days await those wanderers, many of whom are most assuredly children of the kingdom who have lost their way, but who will not lose it for ever. A more constraining sense, a nearer sight, of the Divine Redeemer's claims, will come when men see that He can, and does, give by His Spirit love, joy, peace, patience to those who ask Him. When they take into account the works which He did of old, the words which He spake, the impressions which He made when He was upon the earth,—when they see that the society which He founded, the creed which radiates from—which centres in—His person, is more widely accepted now, eighteen centuries after His death, than ever before,—they may reconsider their prejudices. They may say less than they mean when they admit that there is something to be said for Christianity after all. They may rise from the tomb into which they had fallen—the tomb of doubt, the tomb of carelessness, the tomb of evil-living—into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

My brethren, we are too apt, it may be, to think of Christ's first coming as of

a thing that is past and gone. In one sense it is so. Eighteen centuries and a half have passed since He was here visibly among us, and yet we know He is with us now. He came to be with His people, not for thirty-three years only, but for all time. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The incarnation of the eternal Son is a fact perpetuated into history, and the various relations of different souls to the Incarnate, which we study in the pages of the Gospel, are repeated in every generation of Christians. Peter, Thomas, Magdalene, Paul, the Pharisees—ay, Judas, too—they are all of them here with us. The names, the outer guise, are changed: the spiritual history is substantially the same. The conditions of the great problem of the relation of souls to Jesus Christ do not, from age to age, vary materially. He, our Lord, is unchangeable, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And human nature, on its bad and its better sides, is, too, what it has been. Let us, then, try to reflect that the words of Simeon still have their power, and that they suggest a grave question for every one of us. Christ is set now, as of old, for the rise and fall of many. Religion does not save us by the mere fact of our being brought into intimate contact with it. Religious knowledge, opportunities for prayer, kind friends, good books, will not help us to heaven in any case. They may act on us in more ways than one. What is the case with each one of us? Are we conscious of an increasing attraction to the person of our Lord Himself; or are we conscious, say, since this time last year, of a weakened desire to live near Him, and for Him,—of a secret dislike for prayer, conversation, spiritual reading, and other things which are quite sure to become intolerable burdens if they do not minister to us—as all that is prompted by a genuine love of Him does minister—a true delight? Do we feel that we have conquered enemies who were formidable then? Or have we fallen back under the power of enemies whom we flattered ourselves at the time we had conquered once for all? Are our motives simpler, clearer, more uniform; or are they, at best, turbid and composite—a strange mixture of heavenly impulses and of earthly resolves—a moral compromise at the very heart of our being, in which influences which come from below are, it is too probable, steadily but surely getting the better of those which come from heaven? In short, are we falling or rising in the atmosphere of souls,—in that world of spirits which angels watch with the keenest interest—that world in which our real life, whether consciously or not, is lived,—in which we are preparing for an irreversible fall, or for a completed resurrection? Surely, this is a question for Advent. We must, sooner or later, look the greatest of all our responsibilities in the face—our responsibility for having known whatever individually we have known of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the talent of talents for which the Great Householder one day will call us most strictly to account. Christ is set for the fall or rising of each single human being in this cathedral. His will is that we all should rise. Do not let us balk His gracious purposes. Rather, while yet we may, let us cling by faith, by love, by sincere repentance, to His pierced hands, that we may have a part in the first, the moral resurrection, and then, by His grace and mercy, in the second beyond it.

"THE PRINCE OF PEACE."

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 24TH, 1876.

"The Prince of Peace."—ISA. ix. 6.

THIS year, my brethren, we have a very short advent. for, before we have done with the last Sunday of the season, the Christmas festival is upon us. Within a few hours Christendom will be again rejoicing in the birth of the Divine Redeemer; a thousand choirs will chant the hymn of the angels; and all the families of mankind on which our gracious Saviour has set the mark of the redemption will hasten, in the early dawn of morning, to associate themselves with the joys of Joseph and of Mary. As yet, we are but on the brink of this strong, deep flood of ecstasy in which, year by year, every true soul throughout the Church of God rejoices, for some few hours, at least, to escape from the toils and cares of our earthly existence. As yet, the bells of Christmas have not burst upon our ears, and its accustomed anthems are but just approaching us; but we can hardly go wrong if, this afternoon, our thoughts are given to Him Who is the great subject of to-night and to-morrow morning. That gracious Saviour, Whose goodness and condescension we celebrate, will surely bless this our early preparation for His birthday; and we may already hail Him on His manger-throne, receiving the worship of earth and heaven, in the words of the prophet who most fully has announced Him, as "the Prince of Peace."

"The Prince of Peace." This is the climax of the titles which were to belong to the mysterious Child Who, in the course of time, was to be born to Israel. Isaiah had before told King Ahaz that such a Child would be born of a virgin Mother, and would bear a name—"Immanuel"—signifying the Divine presence in the midst of Israel. And now the prophet beholds Him as already here. "Unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given." And he proceeds to enumerate his prerogative titles—titles which explain his dignity and his work. "His name shall be called Wonderful." His birth is miraculous. He is Himself, when measured by the standard of common men, a standing miracle. His union of the Divine and the human in a single person is "the mystery of godliness." His second title is "Counsellor." The prophet says elsewhere, "He is the Lord of Hosts, wonderful in counsel." He is the disinterested and all-wise Adviser

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to Whom, in their perplexity, His people may have recourse. Then, thirdly, He is "the Mighty God." His gentle intimacy with the race which He comes to bless and to save may not disguise the majesty of His eternal person. If He takes on Him the form of a servant, He is not the less from all eternity in the form of God. And thus, fourthly, He is "the Everlasting Father," or, more strictly, "the Father of eternity." Before Him all that has been, is, and is to be, lies open in its completeness. And He is the Author of blessings innumerable, imperishable, which are yet to come. And so, lastly, in contemplating Him the prophet returns, as it were, from heaven to earth. He is the high and holy One Who inhabiteth eternity ; but for us, the children of men, He is the Author of one of the best blessings which a fallen and distracted race can know : He is "the Prince of Peace."

"The Prince of Peace." The princes of this world not unfrequently take their titles from districts with which they have no present relations whatever, —only on account of some ancient, perhaps half legendary, reason which has long lost the meaning which once it had. But here we have no such merely titular declaration. This Prince, of Whom Isaiah speaks, introduces and establishes the reign of peace by the conquest of its enemies ; for the word which is here translated "prince" is the same Hebrew word which is translated "captain" in the account of the vision of Joshua beneath the walls of Jericho ; and it exactly corresponds to the Greek word in the phrases—"Captain of our salvation"—"Author of our faith"—which are applied to our Lord in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The bearer of this title, then, was not simply Himself to reign in a sphere or realm of peace. He was to enlarge and carry forward the range of its blessings. He was to be the Author of peace, as well as the Lover of concord. He was to correspond in history to that word of prophecy—"Thus saith the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy : I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is nigh."

The coming into the world of such a Being as this Prince of Peace—superhuman on the one hand, yet, on the other, closely bound up with the fortunes and with the race of man—was, from the first, present to the mind of those to whom God in early ages revealed His will. When Adam's fatal act of disobedience had destroyed man's peace with God and with himself, there came a promise of One, the seed of the woman, Who should bruise the head of man's spiritual enemy, and restore thereby the reign of peace. And such a visitant was foreshadowed—so we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews—in that mysterious personage, the old priest-king, Melchizedek. He reigned in Salem, and the very name was significant. He was, in his measure, a king of peace. And then the prophecy of Shiloh, the tranquil one, pointed in the same direction. At one time it seemed as if the expected prince had actually come in the person of King Solomon. His name, Shalomah, meant "the peaceful monarch," who contrasted, as such, with his warrior father, David. "He shall be," so ran the message, "a man of rest, and I will give him rest from the enemies round about. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days." And yet Solomon, as we know, did not merely fail to realise the ideal of the Prince of Peace : he was himself inspired, in the seventy-second Psalm, to describe a Monarch of Whose mighty and tranquil empire his own was, at its best, but a faint and passing shadow. "In His days shall the righteous flourish ; yea, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. His dominion also shall be from one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end. They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him : His enemies shall lick the dust." And thus, later on, in Isaiah, we find that both the righteous King, announced by the prophet in the earlier days of his ministry, and the Servant of the Lord, so constantly on his lips in his later days, meet in this hope and promise of a Prince of Peace. "The work of the King's righteousness," as we have heard this afternoon, "shall be peace ; and the effect of His righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." And, on the other hand, upon the Servant of the Lord is the chastisement of our peace laid. He endures the needful punishment in order to establish peace. As He publishes peace, His feet, in the eyes of the prophet, are beautiful upon the mountains of the world. The covenant which He mediates with heaven

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is a covenant of peace. The officers of His empire are men of peace. Peace will be extended throughout it like a flowing stream. Great will be the peace of its children.

It is not to be wondered at that a promise like this should have been heard and treasured, though in a distorted and imperfect form, among the nations who dwelt outside and around the people of revelation. There were many echoes of it in the heathen world; and, just before our Lord was born, there was one specially famous which would have entwined this distinctive glory of the Redeemer around the brow of an heir of the empire of Rome. Rome, too, had a peace of its own. "The Roman peace" was the dulcet phrase beneath which that proud empire of blood and iron disguised the hard realities of its world-wide rule. "They make a solitude and call it peace"—such was the comment of the conquered races—the peace of forced submission, the peace of sheer exhaustion, the peace of death. This was not the peace of the promised Prince for Whom Israel hoped; but the phrase was worth something, nevertheless. It was the homage of a world in darkness feeling after God—feeling for a deliverer who should bring relief to its unresting misery. Accordingly, when He, our Lord Jesus Christ, was born into the world, the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." When He was taking leave of His disciples before He suffered, "Peace," He said, "I leave with you: My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." When He had risen from the grave, and appeared in the midst of His Apostles in the upper chamber, His blessing ran thus—"Peace be unto you." When an Apostle would describe the essential note of the kingdom of Christ in the soul of man, he names, besides righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost, "peace." But this peace was not to be bestowed at random and indiscriminately. "Think ye," said this Divine Author, "That I am come to send peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division." Before peace was possible there must be a struggle: there must be victory. There must be division first, and then reconciliation. Peace is not the first effect of the work of Christ, but its flower—its crown. This is the more important to note in view of some difficulties which will appear to confront us when we proceed to enquire how far has the Prince of Peace made good His title?—what is the sphere within which He has as yet conquered and made it His own?

What, then, is the sphere wherein is displayed the peace of Christ? Is it the civilised world—so much of the world as owns, however hesitatingly, the Christian name? Is it the world at large?

Undoubtedly, brethren, to establish peace in this sphere, and on this scale, is our blessed Master's ultimate aim—peace between families, between nations, between races—peace between classes and interests which are hostile in virtue of long tradition—peace, not at any price, but at the price of mutual self-sacrifice. This is, in some form or other, at some date or other, to be the work of our Divine Redeemer. In that description of the completed establishment of the kingdom of Christ, at the beginning of the second chapter of Isaiah, which precedes the description of the judgment, this is the climax of the projected triumph. It begins, "It shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it, and many people shall go, and say, Come ye, let us go up to the house of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And then, as the product of this spontaneous press of the nations into the Church of God, it follows, "And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." As a living poet has condensed the picture,—

"Down the dark future, through long generations,
The sounds of war grow fainter, and then cease;
And, like a bell with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear the voice of Jesus Christ say, 'Peace!'"

And here it is impossible not to stop and ask, "Where is the present counterpart of all this? Where is the reality? What are the ideas, the aspirations, the passions—what is the language—what the prospects and anticipations—with which, day by day at this very moment, we are increasingly familiar? Does not everything around us speak of possible—I should say, perhaps, of probable—and extended war? Is not this the topic of public conversation wherever we meet together? Is it not the constant subject of discussion day after day in our public prints? Does it not fill the air, not in this country only, but in every country throughout Europe? Do we not hear of negotiations which scarcely hope to do more than limit the range of the impending struggle? Do we not hear of vast armaments to the extent and resources of which each day that passes makes serious additions, intended to promote war on a gigantic scale? Is not the reverse of the prophet's language nearer, as it seems, to the literal fact? Are not our ploughshares being beaten back into swords, and our pruning hooks into spears, at least in half the nations of the civilised world?

And then, when attention has been called to the apparent discrepancy between the prophecy and the actual, the appalling fact, another set of questioners appear upon the scene. "Does not this," they say, "prove that Christianity is a failure? Does it not show that it has no real access to the springs of human action—no power to mould the course of human history? Does it not demonstrate that the documents to which Christianity appeals as its credentials are, in fact, its condemnation,—that these very documents—these inspired poems—the splendid aspirations upwards towards the impossible—have only placed before the world a glorious ideal which has not been—which cannot be—realised?" No, brethren, it is not so. The Prince of Peace works in the centuries: He can afford to wait. He takes His time. As in the day of His flesh, so in history, He teaches men only as they are able to bear His teaching. Not by sudden and violent catastrophes, but through the slow evolution and victory of principles, does He make captive the powers of the world. For instance, slavery, although from the first implicitly condemned to abolition by the essential principles of the Gospel, was tolerated and proscribed for by the great Apostles themselves; and it has only disappeared even from the Christian world, if indeed it has disappeared, in this our nineteenth century. And, as with slavery, so with war. War is condemned by the spirit and drift of all Christian teaching, although the New Testament seems in a sense to recognise it by laying down the duties of soldiers just as it seems to recognise slavery by prescribing the duties of masters and of slaves. But war, so an Apostle teaches us, as a rule, has its origin in unregulated human desire; and when all hearts and minds, or those of the majority, are brought into the obedience of Christ, then war will become impossible.

Meanwhile, until this is the case, war is not only possible, it is, under certain circumstances, even necessary. If war for selfish aggrandisement, or for the many unworthy objects which may be vaguely, although wrongly, described as essential to national interest or national honour, is indefensible on Christian principles, war to punish a great wrong, or to bring deliverance to the oppressed, may be a Christian duty—just as much a duty in a nation as it would be a duty in a high-minded man to come to the assistance of a woman or a child whom he saw maltreated in the street by a vigorous ruffian. For purposes like this, as our Article says, it is lawful for Christian men to wear weapons, and serve in the wars; that is, when war is the instrument of justice—when it is the herald of mercy. Only when the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ—only when hearts and minds have been penetrated, to an extent we dare not think of as yet, with the principles of the eternal Gospel in all races and nations—will all war become literally impossible. Only then will the vision be realised, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire." Meanwhile, do not let us try to escape from the difficulty by saying that Christian principles are excellent for the individual man, but inapplicable to the conduct of nations; for to say this is high treason against the authority of Christ. If the rules which He taught us are really authoritative, they ought to control the conduct of nations not less than the conduct of private persons like you and me.

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Nations, after all, have no existence apart from the human beings who compose them. Nations, are only large companies of human beings, and what is right or wrong for each one of the men who make up a nation must be right or wrong for all of those men collectively. Moral obligations do not evaporate in a crowd, and Christ our Lord assuredly meant His moral teaching to enter into and to control the conduct of nations—in other words, to be the spirit of politics. Nay, if this is, as yet, not the case,—if men who would shrink from wrong in their individual capacity advocate it as members of a corporation, or as citizens, or as rulers of a state, this only shows how much our Lord has yet to do before the world—even the Christian world—is really His. But, if He yet delays this work, this is no proof whatever that He will not complete it, or that, in the end, the world will not be subject to the Prince of Peace.

Is the Christian Church, then, the sphere in which we may contemplate the peace of Christ? This is not an unreasonable expectation, and here again prophecy has drawn a picture which might encourage it, and which haunts the conscience of a divided Christendom. Isaiah tells us how the rod out of the stem of Jesse would appear upon the earth, as a perfect discernor and judge of men. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth." And, as a consequence of this appearance of a perfect critic of men—perfect in His knowledge of them, perfect in His fairness and consideration when dealing with them—there would be an attraction of classes and characters and tempers, the most divergent, to His presence and His feet: there would be a gathering together of those who had always been separated, and a reconciliation of those who were traditionally hostile. Nature would be conquered—reversed—by the energy of His grace. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fawning together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt or destroy, in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The secret of this union of the unlike—of this intimacy between the incompatible—of this congregation into one of all that is opposed in human character and natural sympathy—is to be found, so the prophet again proceeds to teach, in Him Who is the common attraction and centre of all. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and His rest shall be glorious." And we seem to catch the historical counterpart to all this when we are told by the author of the Acts of the Apostles that "all who believed were together, and had all things common," and again that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." And in the same sense St. Paul insists on the virtual disappearance of distinction of class and country, and station, and even sex, in the new unity, higher and stronger as that unity was than any natural bond—the unity of the faithful in the body of Christ. To the Colossians he writes, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all;" to the Galatians—"There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus;" to the Ephesians—"He is our peace, Who hath made both Jew and Gentile one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandment contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace;" and later on, to the same Church of Ephesus—"There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above, and through all, and in you all."

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And now we turn from the prophetic forecast and the apostolic description to the actual Christendom which lies around us, and in which we live and work. Where is now the unity of the prophet and the Apostle? Where is the super-human peace which was to awe—which did awe—individual self-assertion down or up into a joyous harmony? What is the spectacle which meets our eye, but one of widespread anarchy and confusion, in which the forces which should be directed, with concentrated energy, to further the conversion of the heathen, and the salvation of the world, are spent, if not altogether, yet with prodigal wastefulness, upon internecine conflict? Do we not behold an almost hopeless rivalry between the greater divisions of the Christian Church? Do we not find, within the limits of this or that smaller fragment of it, subdivisions of opinion, subdivisions of sympathy, which threaten to tear into smaller shreds what yet remains of organic coherence? And must we not mark how our divisions are made the most of by those which would fain cast out as evil the name of our common Lord and Master—how exaggerated—how intensified by the process of exaggeration—how they form the best current arguments against Christianity? It seems natural, as we gaze on this spectacle of ruin, to cry out, with an old psalmist surveying the miseries of an earlier age, “Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt; thou didst cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou madest room for it; and when it had taken root it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar trees. She stretched out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast Thou broken down her hedges, so that they which pass by the way pluck off her grapes? The wild boar out of the wood doth root it up; the wild beasts of the field devour it. Turn Thou again, Thou God of hosts, look down from heaven and behold and visit this vine.”

There are those that would escape from the misery of contemplating the wounds of the Church of God by assuming that one of its fragments represents the whole, and that a vigorous absolutism which proscribes all free expansion of heart and of thought, but which can only silence where it would fain convince—that a monarchy which has been slowly built up during the course of ages by a long line of able ecclesiastical statesmen—represents the Divine unity of Pentecost. And then there are others who seek to satisfy the language of Scripture by inventing a second and invisible Church, distinct altogether from the Church visible and militant, to which they think that Scripture language may yet apply, but of which Scripture itself, closely questioned, says absolutely nothing. And others there are who, seeing how unsatisfactory is each of these expedients, give the whole thing up as hopeless, and pronounce Christianity, considered as an attempt to organise the spiritual life of the human race, as a proved failure.

My brethren, Christ, the Prince of Peace of the world in past times, is also, we may well believe, the Prince of a future peace in His divided Church. In its earlier days He has shown what He can do for its rest—for its unity, although it is to be noted how under the very eye of the Apostle there were fierce divisions, like those at Corinth, rending the unity of the sacred fold. Certainly He has not forced visible unity permanently upon it, any more than He has forced holiness upon it against the will of those human beings who in successive generations have made it up. And the consequence has been that, as in some centuries the witness of holiness has been obscured among Christians, so in others the witness of unity has been suspended. For the time—for long tracts of time—it has been forfeited, but Christ the Prince of Peace remains the pledge of a present capacity for union among His followers—the pledge, we must be sure, of its future restoration. He is like the sun in the heavens upon whose face men who inhabit different continents, and who never saw each other in life, and who speak different tongues, and who think of each other nothing at all, or only thoughts of hatred and suspicion, yet gaze with a common thankfulness and joy as upon the source of their common blessings. One day that sun shall lighten their paths towards each other: one day it shall enable them to do justice to that human unity which alike embraces them. Nor is it other with the Sun of Righteousness. The nearer the separated Churches draw to Him in faith, in repentance, in prayer, in sacraments, the nearer most assuredly do they draw to each other,—the nearer are

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they to that blessed moment when they will again glorify and praise the reconciliatory power of the Prince of Peace. "He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

Is then the life of the individual Christian the sphere in which we may look for the peace of Christ? Brethren, here it is that the Prince of Peace, from the first and until now, has set up His standard—has established His empire. There, at least, He has always reigned, and for a reason which it is easy to recognise. The reign of the Prince of Peace in a single soul depends only upon the loyal disposition of a single will. His reign in the Church, and still more in the world at large, depends upon the converging dispositions of millions of wills. And thus the conditions of the peace of the single soul are so simple as to insure its continued reproduction; and, in every generation of Christians, the Divine promise has been abundantly fulfilled, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

Like the peace of the world and the peace of the Church, the peace of the soul, if it is to last, must be based on righteousness. Peace cannot be infused into a sinful soul: it cannot be imposed by force upon a soul which is a prey to insurrectionary passions. It is impossible, where unrenounced sin has thrown everything into disorder—where riot reigns—in an untamed will—in undisciplined desires—in a conscience whose protests cannot be silenced, cannot be drugged—in a sustained conflict between the dictates of inclination, and, I will not say the sense of duty, but even the sense of well understood interest. Peace is impossible where the past and the present and the future alike suggest anxiety and dissatisfaction,—where to look backward is to recall much which it would be a blessing, but which it is impossible, to blot out,—where to look at what is passing is to feel that what has been still continues,—where to look onward is to expect some inevitable retribution for which at any moment the hour may sound. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." The peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord—hearts and minds which are based on righteousness. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." The righteousness of Christ, the new and perfect Man—claimed on our side by faith—imparted on His side by the gifts and through the channels of grace—is the basis in the soul of a true and lasting peace—peace between God and man—peace in the human soul between its several faculties and powers. There is peace between the Father in heaven and the living members of His incarnate Son; and in the true Christian soul there is no standing war between intellect and feeling—between conscience and inclination—between passion and reason—between thought and faith. Misunderstandings are transient: peace is the order of the day—peace in the intelligence which, being fixed supremely on the eternal and unchanging truth, knows little or nothing of those painful vicissitudes of doubt and conviction to which they are exposed who are "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" peace in the affections which have opened to the eternal beauty and cannot now be allured by any merely created beauty which, at the best, is a poor and pale reflection of their true object; peace in the will which is now strongly and undeviatingly attracted towards the one true object of duty, and finds in the absence of distracting objects its repose no less than its excellence. From this—the peace of Christ in the Christian soul—peace gradually radiates—gradually but surely—into society, into the Church, into the world at large. The Prince of Peace works now, as at the first, through those souls whom He has made His own—through whom He leavens the mass around. All can contribute something to His work: all can refuse the contribution. And each soul that is at peace with itself and with God works thereby, however distantly, for the cause of universal peace—works for the harmony of the Church and of the world—works (we may dare to say it) for the credit and glory of the Prince of Peace.

It is a good rule, they say, to have some one particular prayer at each Communion, upon which the whole effort and force of the soul should then be concentrated. At these sacred times, we know, prayer has especial power with

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God, and it is a matter of prudence to make the most of them. How can those of us who have the happiness to be communicants do better, to-morrow morning, on our Lord's own birthday, than ask Him to illustrate, by new gifts and mercies, His glorious prophetic title, the Prince of Peace? Ask Him, while yet the scourge of war is delayed, if it may be, for peace among the nations—a peace which may be lasting, because based, not on complicity with wrong, but on provision for the claims of mercy and of justice. Ask Him, in these days of ecclesiastical quarrels and controversies, for peace in the Church—in the whole Church and in our own branch of it—a peace based, not on enforced reconciliations and enforced submissions, but again on charity and justice, that the world may know, better than it knows now, that the Father hath sent Him. Ask Him, lastly, for peace—an increased and abundant peace—in your own souls—a peace based on His own eternal truth and life-giving righteousness—a peace which will stand unshaken in the hour of death and in the day of judgment. Ask Him for "that peace which the world cannot give, that both your hearts may be set to obey His commandments, and also that, being defended by Him from the fear of your enemies, you may pass your time in rest and quietness," and may in this, His peace, reach your eternal home.

GOD, THE SOUL'S TRUE HOME.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 31st, 1876.

"Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another."

PSALM XC, 1 (Prayer-Book version).

THIS is, beyond fair doubt, the oldest psalm in the whole psalter. It is the work, not of David, but as the inscription tells us in the Bible version, of Moses. The contents of the psalm, closely examined, bear the inscription out. In this psalm we have the old language—many of the peculiar phrases—of the books of Moses, especially of Deuteronomy; besides which, the spirit of the psalm is the spirit of Moses, the man of God. Awe at God's goodness—the sense of man's insignificance—the deep insight into the meaning of God's chastisements—the pathetic sense of the shortness of man's average life—the passionate prayer for more light, more spiritual wisdom, in contemplating the work and the ways of God,—this is just what we might expect from Moses as we know him in his own books. Especially like Moses is the union of melancholy and fervour which meets us here—the fervour of the intrepid servant of God dashed by the melancholy which followed on his great disappointments. Do we not hear the voice of Israel's leader at the close of the long penal wanderings in the desert in the words—"We consume away in Thy displeasure, and are afraid at Thy wrathful indignation. Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee, and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. For when Thou art angry all our days are gone: we bring our years to an end as a tale that is told." Is it not Moses who, almost within sight of Canaan, prays, "Comfort us again after the time Thou hast plagued us, and for the years in which we have suffered adversity"?—and then, in view of the Divine sentence of exclusion from the promised land, checks himself,—“Show Thy servants Thy work, and their children Thy glory.” And are not the opening words of the psalm which are before us in the

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text just what we might expect from this mighty soul, turning away from the chequered scenes of a career full of triumph and full of failure—turning resolutely to the one eternal Being before Whom all human things are poor and insignificant?—"Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, Thou art God from everlasting and world without end." Moses is not thinking of himself alone. He associates with himself all true servants of God around him. "Lord, Thou hast been *our* refuge." He is not for the moment confined within the frontiers of Israel. God had been served in ages when Israel as yet was not. Upon all the earliest fathers of the human race whose names had or had not been preserved in the sacred books as servants of the Most High—upon all the lonely, hard, heroic lives which had been lived in those earliest days, true to the faint light of the earliest revelation—upon these, too, the lawgiver's thought is resting. Associated with them, not less than with the Israel of his own day, he places himself before the presence of his Maker,—“Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another.” He is the spokesman and representative of all that is good and great in the past annals of mankind. He is speaking for the living : he is speaking also for the dead. And his words do not die with himself. One after another, the generations take them up, first in Israel then in Christendom. As the centuries pass, the chorus which repeats them is ever becoming more numerous—more varied. The spiritual experience which they represent is continually deeper and wider ; and they are repeated at this moment by more souls in earth and heaven than ever before—souls which have found in them the motto and the secret of life, whether in struggle or in victory,—“Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another.”

Many of us will remember this psalm in connection with some of the saddest and most solemn moments of our lives. It is one of the two psalms used in the order for the burial of the dead, and of the two we may dare to say it is the deepest. It pierces most completely to the inmost springs of human feeling : it unveils more of the meaning and awfulness of life and death. Then in those solemn moments which, sooner or later, await us all in this earthly pilgrimage,—then when we are committing to the dust the form which we have known and loved best on earth,—then when the accustomed trivialities which shroud from most of us, during so large a part of our existence, the real seriousness of life, have fallen away, and we stand face to face with its true conditions—then we probably are able to breathe a new force of meaning into the words, “Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another.”

“Our refuge.” In the Bible version more accurately it is “our dwelling-place.” God is the home of the soul of man. As Moses says in his blessing on collective Israel, “The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms”—words in which we find the two-fold idea of protection and endearing welcome. No doubt a man's home is a refuge—a refuge from the wind and the rain—a refuge from the cares and conflicts of the outer world, from the hard words and deeds of other men. The inviolability of the home is the spirit of our English proverb that a man's house is his castle ; and in this sense God is the home of the soul. The soul finds in the presence of God a protection against the enemies which threaten it with ruin in the rough life of the outer world. In this sense David cries, “I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my strong rock and my defence, my Saviour, the God of my might

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and in Whom I will trust—my buckler, the horn also of my salvation and my refuge.” Or again, “Be Thou my strong rock and house of defence that Thou mayest save me. Thou art my strong rock and my castle.” Or again, “Be Thou my stronghold whereunto I may always resort. Thou hast promised to help me : Thou art my house of defence and my castle.” Or again, “Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “I will say unto the Lord, Thou art my hope and my stronghold, my God in Thee will I trust ; for He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter and from the noisome pestilence. He shall defend thee under His wings : thou shalt be safe under His feathers. His faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” On the other hand, besides this idea of protection from evils without, the word suggests a place where care is thrown aside—where the affections expand themselves freely and fully—where loving looks and kindly words and gentle deeds are the order of the day. When God is said to be the refuge or the home of man, it is meant that God gives to man His best and tenderest welcome,—that God—God alone—is the Being in Whom man finds perfect repose and satisfaction for all the faculties and sympathies of his nature,—that for man's higher or spiritual self the one eternal Being is what the fire-side is for the domestic affections—a sphere in which man abandons himself to perfect enjoyment—to that easy, careless, joyous, delight which comes with a sense of being among friends with whom no reserve is either necessary or possible. Contrast this idea of the relation between God and the man's soul with the three fundamental relations in which we men stand to Him as our maker, our preserver, and the end or object of our existence.

God is our Creator, the Author of our being. “It is He which hath made us and not we ourselves.” And as our Maker He has an absolute right to do what He wills with us. And God is our Preserver : He upholds us in existence during each moment of our life so that if He were to withdraw His hand we should fall back into the nothingness out of which He has taken us. God is the End, the Object of our being. As we sprung into existence from His creative touch, so we are bound to struggle upwards, onwards, towards Him,—to make Him the true aim of our existence, since apart from Him there is no sort of reason why we should exist at all. “Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory for ever.” These are the frontiers, the awful frontiers, which bound our life—the love of God which bids us exist—the love of God which perpetuates our existence—the love of God which draws us by a moral attraction, but not at all by any material or compulsive necessity, towards Him as the Object and End of our existence.

But then here in this word “refuge” or “home” we have another and a much more tender relation of God to the human soul. He Who bade us be—He Who keeps us in being—He towards Whom our whole being should tend—is also our true and lasting resting-place. He is to us what no other being is, or can be. He is the one Being within Whose life we can find and make a lasting home. He is for all the best spirits among the sons of men, though living in different ages, different climes, different countries, different civilisations, the one Being in Whom perfect repose and satisfaction are found to be attainable. “Thou shalt hide them privily in Thy own presence from the provoking of all men. Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues. With Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light we shall see light.”

Some may perhaps be disposed to think that this is old world language

which has been true to men in bygone days—which is no longer true to us. “The conditions of our life,” it is said, “are so different from theirs.” If the middle ages have passed and gone, what shall we say of the age of David—what of the age of Moses? Life is so very different with us men of the nineteenth century. It is so exacting, so interesting, so many-sided, that the concentrated intensity upon spiritual interests which was natural in earlier ages is, we may be tempted to think, no longer possible. “The conditions of life”—(that is the phrase)—“are altogether different.”

Here we have an ambiguous phrase which we must take to pieces if we would do it justice. If by “the conditions of life” be meant its outward surroundings, or even the varying phases of our human thought, the saying may pass muster. These things are constantly changing—changing by the law of God’s providence—changing in obedience to man’s own thought and skill and effort. Man’s power over nature within certain frontiers is continually becoming greater. Man’s power of making the most of himself by government, by national association and enterprise, by scientific appliances, is constantly on the increase. It is difficult, no doubt, for some young people to think that they are only the grandchildren of, or the great grandchildren of, people who had not merely no telegraphs and railroads, but also no gas and no steamboats. It is still more difficult to connect themselves with ancestors, not so many generations before, who never dreamt of such a thing as a newspaper, or, earlier still, who never saw a printed book. What a change there is in our human life between the England of the Plantagenets and the England of Elizabeth. What a greater change between the England of Elizabeth and that of George III. What a change, greatest of all, between the England of George III. and the England of Victoria. Nor does this change extend only to the outward circumstances, appliances, embellishments of life. It is not less remarkable in a great many habits and moods of thought and feeling. When we have perhaps alighted by chance on a packet of letters belonging to persons of our own family two or three generations back, and see how precise and stiff were their habits of thought—how quaint and formal their phrases—how different their whole way of looking at ordinary things from that which is familiar and, as we say, natural to ourselves,—we seem to be living in another world from theirs. Everything is so strangely different—almost everything, so we think, perhaps with some reason, has improved so vastly since their time—that we forget what it is that we and they have in common—what it is that they had in common with earlier ancestors from whom they seem to differ as much as we differ from them—what it is that is common to us and the remotest generations that will follow us.

My brethren, the leading conditions of life do not change. We are born into the world just as were our earliest, our rudest ancestors. We leave it just as certainly as they did—often perhaps with rather more of suffering than less because our science has enabled us very slightly to prolong life under conditions which would have forfeited life for them. Our hold upon it depends in the main on the same rules and laws as theirs did, and thus the frontiers of earthly life remain what they were. None of our inventions, none of our improvements, no part of our progress, scientific or social, has done anything whatever to enlarge them. The one great discovery—the discovery which should provide an escape from physical death—is just as far off from us as it was when Cæsar conquered Britain. And, as a consequence of this constancy in

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the leading conditions of human existence, the relations of man to the eternal God are constant too. Now and then in moments of passing excitement and illusion men speak as if they could do without God—as if He were only part of the mental furniture of some past age and had been left behind in the distance of history,—as if they were in some sense degraded by this dependence on an unseen Being Who holds the key to the secret of their destiny. But this kind of language never has borne—never will bear—the wear and tear of reflection, of discussion, of life. The most ancient of beings is also (we may reverently say it) the most modern. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” And man does not lose anything by confessing himself dependent on the maker and ruler of this universe. Nothing but a demonstration that God does not exist will prevent the wisest and best of men from seeking the source of that which they are and have in that inexhaustible life to the end of time.

“Lord, Thou hast been our refuge.” This is the spirit of the very noblest occupation in which we can engage: it is the spirit of prayer. This acknowledgment underlies all the forms which the soul’s intercourse with God is wont to take. Whether it be intercession for others, or praise of God’s attributes, or thanksgiving for past mercies, or petition for new graces,—whether it be common prayer or private prayer,—whether it be expressed in stately liturgies, or breathed in thoughts and feelings which are beyond language,—whether it be an active movement of the soul’s every power, or a tranquil contemplation of the one unchanging eternal being,—prayer is always, in its widest sense, an act by which the soul of man, here amid these changing scenes of time, seeks its true home and resting-place in seeking God. And as such it always ennoble men—not less now than in the earliest days of man’s history. Now, as then, every man is all the better for honestly recognising the true conditions of his existence. God is not less necessary to the wisest of us than He was to our rudest forefathers. Our gilded civilisation is no sort of protection against the widespread misery around us,—“the changes and chances of this mortal life” which are the lot of us all. The realities of life force us to look beyond it,—to cry with Moses, “Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another.”

And to-day we have almost reached one of these landmarks on the road of life, which few men pass without some thought. A year does not count for much in the history of a world, but it counts for a great deal in the very longest life. Its issues one way or the other cannot but be of lasting and of vast importance. And to have done with it, and to be on the point of laying it—as in a few hours we shall lay this year 1876—in its grave is a solemn thing for all who feel what life is, and what lies beyond it. Certainly, my brethren, time moves at the same rate all the year round, and the divisions by which we mark its progress, if they have their grounds in nature, are in their form more or less artificial; but the fact to which they call attention is altogether independent of our arrangements. Time passes, whether we think of it or not. We cannot be always thinking of it, and therefore it is surely well that, now and then, at definite intervals, we should be compelled to think of it, that we may draw from the thought new motives for making the best of that which yet remains. And time as it passes certainly does bring with it that which sooner or later should force us to turn our hearts to God. It brings with it to one man sickness,—to another sorrow,—to a third sin. It brings with it, sooner or later, to all that last scene of all: it brings death.

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Since this day last year some of you perhaps have learnt what has been, for you, a new experience—what it is to be in broken health. Until January, 1876, you never knew what it was to feel ill. You knew others who were ill : you saw what the human frame might have to go through, and could go through, on this side of the grave, in the case of men and women around you. It never came practically home to you. You were as you thought perfectly sound. Your chest, your limbs, your breathing, your powers of taking sleep and taking exercise, were unimpaired. You relished your life, but then you took health as a matter of course. You had a feeling without, of course, putting it into words, that you might go on for ever. At the beginning of this year, on looking back, you found that 1875 had been just as good as any year before it, and you did not see why all should not continue to be as it had hitherto been. But since then there has been a change. Something has given out : some organic mischief has shown itself : it is heart : it is lungs : it is perhaps, brain. The physical mechanism of your life is out of gear. True, you may be patched up : you may go on for some time : you may pay a tax of some sort to buy off for a while the disease which threatens your life. But now you know and feel that you exist in this world on new conditions ; you exist, speaking physically, not by right but on sufferance. Any sudden change of whether, any sudden shock, any sharp strain upon your remaining stock of strength, might be the messenger of death. You cannot be sure of yourself from day to day. You scarcely venture to look beyond the day, into the weeks and months and years of the coming time. And then, especially during the first phases of a new state of health like this, you are probably enough inclined to free and to chafe against it. You look back regretfully to the strength, and activity, and enterprise, and freedom from pain, and fresh, joyous, bounding life of your former years. You ask whether it has really gone—gone for ever. You sigh with the sick King Hezekiah, in this afternoon's first lesson, "I am deprived of the residue of my years. He will cut me off with pining sickness. From day to night will He make an end of me." Brethren, this broken health is a warning that time is passing. Your reason tells you that sooner or later, in some way or other, the great change which awaits us all must come to you. It might have come in a moment in the crash of a railway accident,—by a flash of lightning,—by a sudden stoppage of the heart's action. Surely it is better that you should know that it is coming on,—better that you should prepare for it on a lower level of health and strength than that to which you have been accustomed. If you now hold your life by a precarious tenure,—if your body is enfeebled, and your limbs are full of pain, and your spirits are depressed and sad, depend upon it, it has come upon you in mercy. Your good health was your refuge, and lo ! your refuge has broken down. This world was your home, and now you see clearly that you will have to leave it. It is better, I say, surely thus,—better that while there is time you should lift up your heart to Him Who is the one real home of the soul of man. If your bodily strength decays, there is a strength within your reach which will last you for ever. You have only to learn the meaning of the words, "Lord, Thou art our refuge from one generation to another." Or since this day last year, some of you have for the first time known real sorrow. You had read about it in books ; you had traced its effect on the countenances of others ; but, up to the beginning of this present year, you had never felt such pain of mind as would keep you awake at night or weigh you down throughout the day. Since then God has laid His hand upon you. The

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home which was then so bright has become for you a dreary blank. The husband, or the wife, or the child, or the brother, or the sister, has been removed. Everything now is altered; everything seems touched with a gloom which nothing earthly can possibly remove. Certainly the old habits of life remain: the old dwelling is there—the familiar faces of the neighbours, the old scenes and sounds, the recurring duties, the recurring annoyances and excitements and petty incidents, which go to make up life with most of us; but there is now no zest or relish for anything, not even for that which used to please you best. All is draped with gloom: all is touched with bitterness. In every one you meet, in every duty you undertake, in every occurrence which happens to you, in every scene, almost in every sound, you seem to hear one voice,—to trace one form,—to be overcome quite by one memory. All else is for you as if it did not exist. You go through with it mechanically. There is a coming and going around you; there is an excitement and a repose; there is a development of new schemes; there is an abandonment of old habits. Life, we all of us know, is a kaleidoscope, for ever re-arranging its forms and its hues, but it is all the same to you. You are too sick at heart to appreciate any of it. If it forces itself in on you it is, you think, a cruel impertinence which would break in on the silent suffering of your wounded spirit.

And it may be that to this there is added a new and distinct trial. You have led, it may be, a busy life, and public gossip has made free with your doings, with your motives, with your character. While your home was still peopled with those whom you loved, it mattered little. You shut your front door on the ill-natured world out in the street, and you found around your fire-side those who could understand you. There you found intelligence, justice, sympathy. But now the vacancy of home seems to echo the ill-natured voices of the world abroad. Nay, there seems to be some sort of secret understanding between the two, for the old gossip goes on with its varied petty malignity, settling down upon your life, just as the flies settle on a weary or sick animal, which with a presentiment of approaching death, has no longer the heart and pluck to shake them off. In past days you would not have cared for it. You would have taken refuge in your home, reflecting as your home did the verdict of an honest conscience. But now you are unmanned: now you do care: you cannot help it. Every malignant insinuation, every cruel misconception, every ingenious caricature leaves its separate wound, and you exclaim with the psalmist, "My enemies are daily at hand to swallow me up: they came about me like bees. In my adversity they rejoiced and gathered themselves together. Yea, the very abjects came together against me unawares, making mouths at me and ceased not."

Brethren, this is no new experience. It has been so in all the ages. It is an ever recurring episode in the history of the human heart. You are only experiencing what hundreds and thousands have experienced before you. But what is the purpose of Him Who has thus laid His hand upon you in judgment or in love? What is the true meaning of this desolate home—of this wretched, this wounded life—of these ill-natured voices—of this general sense of misery and failure? Believe it, all this should help to wean you from this world: it should suggest another. Your true home is not desolate: your true life is not wretched and wounded. You need not be at the mercy of the world's ill-nature: you need not abandon yourselves to the sense of misery and failure. "The infinite Being Who made you for Himself does not share any of these

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vicissitudes which are attendant upon all created life, and He longs to comfort you. In rising up to Him, in burying your sorrows in His fathomless love, in forgetting the hard tongues of men while you listen to the murmured whispers of the eternal charity, you too may say, "Lord, Thou hast been—Thou art—our refuge from one generation to another."

Or, once more, since this day last year some of those who hear me may be conscious of a great fall from God. Until then there had been many faults, more or less grave, but no deliberate offence,—no looking God first in the face and then resisting Him. Since the fatal hour when that took place all has changed. The light heart, the bright eye, the open countenance, the simple integrity of purpose, all have gone. You carry about with you a wound which you dare not probe. It is festering in secret: it threatens your spiritual being with corruption and death. "My loins," you cry, "are filled with a sore disease: there is no whole part in my body. I am feeble and sore smitten. I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart." And yet there is this cheerful feature in your case—that you do not shut your eyes to it. The worst of all states is to have fallen away from God, and not to know it. You, at least, are not under this illusion. You are not now admiring, petting, extolling the false self which your friends have made for you. You see your true self, poor, and miserable, and blind, and lame. You have plucked away the tinsel coverings of life; you see the skeleton below. The past illusions of your self-love are to you now but a dreadful irony. Perhaps you are shocked at the falsehood, at the emptiness of the years which led you up to your fall, through a forest of illusions. It seems to you as if all was lost—as if nothing could be saved out of the ruin within—as if love, joy, peace, prayer, all had vanished—as if despair in the presence of recognised truth must practically lead to the same result as easy indifference to, or forgetfulness of, deadly evil. No, brethren, it is not so. This sore conscience, like a sore body—like a sore heart—and more completely, should lead you to God. He is the refuge not only of the sick and the sorrowful, but also and pre-eminently of the repentant. He has left you in no doubt. He will meet you if you will turn to Him. Already He is waiting with the best robe, with the fatted calf, at the gate of paradise. His eternal Son, incarnate, crucified for you, is the pledge, the secret of His forgiveness. In the sacrifice offered on Calvary you have a certain warranted pardon. In the heart of Jesus you may find a refuge for the aching misery of the past. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins." You have only to join the great company of penitents which, with the company of the sick and the company of the sorrowful, cries from age to age at the foot of the cross, "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another."

Brethren, we have only been looking backward: let us for one moment look into the future. Where shall we be—you and I—on the last day of 1877? shall we be in health or in sickness? Shall we be in bright spirits or weighed down by sorrow? Shall we be still in the land of the living, or shall we, too, have followed the many who have gone before us into the immense kingdom of those whom we call the dead? How little we can guess even remotely at the answer to these questions! That answer is as truly beyond us as the movements of men and events in a future removed from us by an interval of a thousand years. What can we do but fall this night, each one, on his knees, and cry to the great Author of our existence, Who is also the Saviour and the Sanctifier of our souls. "Lord, my time is in Thy hand: Thou canst dispose of me as Thou wilt. I desire in my weakness to cast myself upon Thee—to associate myself with the great company of Thy servants, to whom Thou hast been and art an eternal home. I desire to find in Thy strength, Thy consolations, Thy pardon, that which will raise me above the things of time. I desire to learn to say with all my heart, and soul, and strength, 'Lord, Thou art my refuge in time and in eternity.'"

MARY'S PERPLEXITY AT THE EMPTY TOMB.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 1st, 1877.

"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."—JOHN XX, 13.

THE tears of Mary Magdalene before the empty grave of Jesus Christ are at first sight out of keeping with the exulting joy of the Easter festival. Doubtless, as the wise man says, there is a time for everything. By common consent mirth is unseemly at a funeral, and mourning at a wedding. No good Christian would think of giving an entertainment on Good Friday. And Easter day, if it be anything, is a day of joy—the brightest, happiest day in the whole Christian year, to every serious worshipper of Christ. This is the day that reminds the Christian of the foundation-fact which proves that his creed is true—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the day which reminds him that the future life for which he lives is a solemn and certified reality, warranted by the resurrection of his Lord and Saviour. Above all, this is the day of Christ's triumph over His enemies—over the enemies of man—over sin and death. As the Christian has sympathised with the mental and bodily suffering of his Lord, so he now rejoices in the triumphs of his Lord. He rejoices because it is his Lord Who triumphs. The song of Moses is also his song, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." On such a day as this, if ever, "the voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous, because the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass—because the right hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence: the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass." And thus it is that on Easter day the tears of Mary Magdalene are, at first sight, inappropriate—almost intrusive. They seem to traverse and to check the flow of joy which is the prerogative grace and privilege of the festival. They recall the hours of the passion and of the burial—the bewildering uncertainty, the sad anguish of Good Friday; and yet let us be sure that they do not appear here in the inspired account of the resurrection, and in the Easter services of the Christian Church, without good reason. My brethren, in our present finite state it is, I apprehend, impossible to surrender ourselves unreservedly to anyone mood of feeling. No earthly sorrow is unrelieved by some ray of brightness. No earthly joy is without the shadow of some threatening or attendant grief. We men almost require a foil if we are to do justice to the positive feeling of the moment, just as a landscape which is relieved by the alternate play of light and shadow is more agreeable to our natural eye-sight than that which lies under the splendid but oppressive glare of a southern sun. Tears, they say, are wont to be unreasonable. They may be sometimes. But Mary Magdalene knew quite well why she wept before the sepulchre. "The angels say unto her,

Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

There is reason in the tears of Mary, for, first, they show her strong and tender love—the most reasonable of all possible forms of love—the love which she had for the perfect moral Being, our Lord Jesus Christ. They expressed her bitter disappointment. She had come to find Him, and He was gone. "They have taken away my Lord." And they imply her longing for more knowledge about Him than she has as yet. They are the earnest of her perseverance. "I know not where they have laid Him."

Let us take these points in order.

The affection of Mary Magdalene for Christ was not a thing of yesterday. He had rescued her from sin and shame: He had cast out of her seven devils. His love had not fallen this time upon an ungrateful heart. While He sat in the house of the Pharisee, who had forgotten the ordinary courtesies of eastern hospitality, the poor penitent pressed into His presence that she might anoint His feet with ointment—that she might wipe them with the hair on which in the days of her vanity she had most prided herself. When He hung dying on Mount Calvary she was there between the desolate mother and the beloved disciple, folded in love and sorrow round the foot of the cross. And now early on the day of the resurrection she is first at the sepulchre. Her eyes prevent the night watches that she may be occupied in her service of love. Her hands are again laden with spices and ointments that she might do the last honours to Him Who was the supreme Object of her affection.

Remark, my brethren, that according to the most probable explanation of the evangelical narrative, Mary Magdalene arrived at the sepulchre alone and first of all. As, you would know, there is at first sight some difficulty in harmonising St. John's account of the first occurrences on Easter morning with that of the other three evangelists. St. John in today's Gospel speaks of Mary Magdalene as coming alone to the sepulchre finding it empty, and then going to fetch St. Peter and himself, whereas the other three evangelists speak of a group of women of whom Mary Magdalene was one. St. Matthew names two, St. Mark names three, as visiting the sepulchre, finding it empty, conversing with the angels who guarded it, and then going away to inform the disciples. Now the best way of accounting for this divergence is to make what, under the circumstances and with the persons concerned, must be admitted to be a very natural assumption. We may assume, without doing violence to the sacred text, that while this entire company of women, of whom Mary Magdalene was one, had set out together from the city long before day-break to visit the tomb of Jesus—the tomb, you will remember, was outside the walls—Mary Magdalene herself under the impulse of her strong overmastering love, separated herself from her companions and hastened on before them. Just as an hour or two later on that same morning St. Peter and St. John ran together to the sepulchre, "but that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre," so there is reason to think it had been with Mary Magdalene. Her more ardent love was impatient of the measured pace of others who indeed loved Jesus well, but loved Him assuredly less than she. And thus in the Gospel narratives taken together we have two visits of women to the sepulchre before the scene described in the text, and also two embassies of women to disciples, or Apostles, and two appearances of Jesus Christ to women in the early morning.

First, Mary Magdalene reaches the sepulchre and finds the stone rolled away. She does not look within: she sees no angel: she returns to the city by some other and shorter path than that along which her companions were advancing. She returns to share her anxieties with Peter and with John. And then the other women reach the sepulchre. They, too, find the stone rolled away. Unlike Mary they enter the sepulchre,

and the are bidden by an angel, whom they find there, to return to Jerusalem and to inform Peter and the disciples that Christ had risen. Meanwhile Mary Magdalene is on her way back to the sepulchre to pay it a second visit, this time in company with St. Peter and St. John. These disciples examine the tomb and return to the city, leaving Mary alone before the empty grave. There she stands, as the lesson which has just been read to us describes her: there she stands weeping and solitary in the bitterness of her grief. This time she stoops down and looks in and sees the traces of the body of Jesus Christ. And then, almost listlessly and without intending it, she enters into conversation with the angels. Jesus is the one thought that fills her soul, and when she is asked why she weeps she answers, "Because they have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Mary Magdalene, then, during the first hours of Easter day, must not be merged in the company of devout women who visited the tomb of Jesus Christ. Her relation to the resurrection is all her own: it is unique. She, the frail woman,—she, the crushed, broken-hearted penitent—makes the first visit to our Saviour's tomb. To her He appears alive before He appears either to Peter or to John, and the secret of this, her high distinction among the first and greatest servants of Christ, is her love. She loved much. This had been the reason of old for her full and free forgiveness. She loved much: this was the motive power which associates her more than any human being with Christ's resurrection glory. And surely there is reason in this; for what is rightly regulated love but moral power of the highest order? As St. Paul puts it, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Few men have ever explored the heights and depths of our human nature more thoroughly than the great Augustine. And St. Augustine has a saying which shows how highly he rated the practical power of love. "Only love," he said, "and then thou mayest do what thou wilt."

Love is indeed the very muscle and fibre of moral force. If the condition of mankind at large is bettered, this is effected by men who love their fellow-men. If goodness is embodied in life and character, this is by those who begin by seeing, however imperfectly, the beauty of goodness, and are enamoured of it before they try to make it their own. If truth is sought and found amid and across difficulties which have seemed insuperable, this is by intellects to which truth has presented itself as an object in itself so beautiful as to win the love of their hearts. And if Mary rose in the dark night to visit the grave of her slain Master, and to pay Him such honours as her poverty could yield, this was because her soul was on fire with the moral power of a strong and pure affection, which was to be rewarded presently by the attainment of its object.

All this might well seem common-place truth, but it requires to be asserted from time to time, and not less in our own day than in past years. The moral power of love—love for goodness—love for human kind—love for right as against wrong—love for truth as against falsehood—is sometimes discredited among us under a new title. "Beware," men say, "of being led away by emotion. Emotion—it is for women, for the unthinking, for the young: it deserves no recognition in the life and conduct of a grown-up, well-instructed, thoughtful man. A man should be swayed only, entirely, by reason, or by what he conceives to be rational. He has as little to do with emotional motives as with the toys of his childhood, or as with the dress of his wife."

Here observe, first of all, an assumption which is by no means warrantable—that emotion is always another name for love. True, all love is emotion of a certain kind, but all emotions are by no means love. Emotion may be vulgar passion; it may be violent hate; it may be passion and hate which, for the moment, are posing in the garb of some

unimpassioned philosophy. And emotion is by no means always power. It may be the very expenditure and forfeiture of power. It may be as unfruitful as any speculation respecting the unknowable and the unattainable that ever haunted the brain of a pedant. But love *is* power. This concentration of purified desire upon a strictly noble object does move—does constrain the resources and faculties of man—does summon a man to make the very utmost of his manhood, whether it be by work or by endurance, and, therefore, love, so far from being the monopoly of women or of children, is the very grace of the strongest and of the noblest manliness. Love kindles reason itself into activity. Love gives nerve and impulse to will. Woe to the man who is without love—without enthusiasm! Woe to him, above all, if he glories in his deprivation—if the glow of a strong love for goodness or for truth in others only provokes in him a smile or a sneer. Little as he may think it, his intellect, or his common sense, is a poor and feeble instrument for all practical purposes when thus divorced from love. Little as he may suspect it, his manhood is most surely impoverished. He has parted with the very secret of its strength. He has done his best when he has raised a laugh at the cost of men who pursue what they believe to be true and good with steady enthusiasm; but he will himself never achieve anything solid or great for the good of his fellow-creatures, or for the glory of his God. It is love now, as in the days of Mary Magdalene, which outlives difficulty—which conquers disappointment, for Mary's words do breathe the cruel disappointment. Mere curiosity would have been tranquil when Mary was in agony. Mary is so disappointed because she loves. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

It may be thought that Mary expected too much—that she hoped to find her Lord and Friend living and risen; but this is to reflect back upon her thoughts in that dark hour our own knowledge of the finished resurrection. There is no reason for thinking that Mary believed more, hoped for more, saw farther and deeper, than did the Apostles. They expected to find Jesus in His grave; so did she. They must have interpreted His saying about rising again the third day in a figurative sense; so did she. They had thought that in His great conflict with the Jewish people He had finally succumbed; so did she. The past was beyond recall; the past was a failure. It was, as she thought, tragic, irretrievable failure. But in His dear body, laid honourably and tenderly in the rich man's grave, there was still an object,—a centre point—for love. Nothing else was left to her. The voice, the manner, the loving presence, the strong and tender words, the works of wonder, and the works of charity—all this was of the past. So she thought all this was gone for ever. But there was—her thought haunted it—there was the mangled form lying out of sight—lying in the grave. Then she would honour this; she would even love and worship it. Upon this she would lavish her costliest and her best. She did not care to look forward. For the moment this was enough; this was her all. And then she came early in the morning, and found Him gone. It was dreadful. She could bear the way of sorrows, the crucifixion, the last hour, the last cry itself, almost better than this. It was, for the moment, the ruin of the little that was left to love; it was the sacrifice of her all. And thus it was that she stood without the sepulchre weeping, and thus it was that she answered the inquiry about her sorrow, "They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him."

But upon this it may be said, again, that if Mary only expected to find the body—the cold body—of her Master, her passionate sorrow at missing it was unreasonable, for Mary, of course, did not know what we who believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ do know—that the body of Jesus as it lay in the tomb, as well as the soul of Jesus as it

descended glorious to the mansions of the dead, were alike uninterruptedly united to His Divine Person, though body and soul were, for the moment, separated by death. To her His body was, as yet, only that of the best of human friends, which must in time mingle with the parent earth, and thus it may be said that Mary was spending her sorrow upon what was after all transient and accidental. Ah, you who say this know but little of true affection. Certainly love seeks its object, but if its object be out of sight then anything that recalls it. The picture of an absent child, the hand-writing of a friend who has passed away, the bit of old furniture, the flower, the animal, the dress, the gait or habit, the recurrence of a season of the year which is entwined with a memory, the repetition of a phase or mood of nature—nay, the marked absence of something which has been customary, and which is, therefore, recalled by a subtle sense of contrast—almost everything—is enough for love. The objects upon which it fixes are, to other states of feeling, matters of indifference, or matters of repulsion—anyhow, matters for astonishment. But to love they are everything. They feel a stimulating glow of tenderness which resolutely transfigures them, and makes them what, in other eyes than those of love, they never could be. And so it was with Mary Magdalene weeping before the dawn of day at the mouth of the sepulchre. We can imagine what comment her tears would have provoked from some well-to-do scribe or Pharisee, learned in the law, having a high place in Jerusalem. We can conceive the wondering, pitying scorn, too amused to be indignant—too annoyed to be thoroughly pleased—with which these traces of passionate attachment to the memory of a criminal condemned by the law in Jerusalem would have been regarded. Why should the Jewish girl thus care to haunt the precincts of the dead in the early hours of the morning, when, as yet, the world was not about? Why should she trouble herself if the masonry had been disturbed—if the grave had been rifled—if the supreme disgrace of crucifixion had been followed by the more tolerable insult of disentanglement? Surely, there were objects in the world nearer her home, with greater claims upon her sympathies. Let her rid herself of this distorted, mawkish sentimentalism as soon as may be. This is what would have been said by such a personage as I am imagining, but what would it have mattered to Mary Magdalene had she known it? Love is, as a rule, supremely indifferent to criticism. It has eyes and ears for one object only. It moves straight forward towards that on which it is fixed: it passes by all else, not with pride or disdain—not even with effort, for it heeds not their existence. Mary was at that time gazing on two angelic forms so splendid and so unearthly that, for fear of them, the soldier-keepers of the grave did 'shake and became as dead men; but to Mary, in that moment of supreme love and sorrow, these glorious angels were as nothing. All that she cared for—all that she hoped for—all her purest feelings—all her loftiest thoughts—had been buried some thirty-five hours before in that rocky tomb along with the mangled body which they bore away in the evening from the hill of Calvary. Do not talk to her of misplaced sentiment, or of attachment to the trifling or the accidental. Do not try to measure the movements of a soul on fire by the stilted rules of your artificial society which can create and can understand anything better than unselfish love. Let her cry on bitterly as she stands there, for she heeds you not. Let her cry awhile and see whether her tears and her love have not that in them from which you may learn something.

Yes, in Mary waiting before the holy grave we find something beyond love and disappointment: we detect the presence of persevering resolution. "I know not," she says, "where they have laid Him." She does not mean to sit down there in the garden and wring her hands and beat her breast and give up all hope—all inquiry. No! He must be somewhere.

Perhaps she has a dim vision of the glorious reality that, after all, He has not been taken away by human hands. Anyhow, she will persevere. She will cross-question anyone that she meets, whether it be an angel or a gardener, till she knows the truth. Her disappointment does not overmaster her love. Her love is still the motive power of her soul. She has her grief, so to speak, well in hand ; she does not mean to despair, because hitherto she has met with failure. When afterwards she supposed herself to be talking with the gardener who had come at the break of day to see about his work, "Sir," she said, "if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Here there is no trace of despair. Here is perseverance, energy, resolution, readiness for any emergency, strong and patient expectation that, after all, something will occur to relieve her anxieties. It was said of English soldiers by a great foreign commander, half in eulogy, half in tone of complaint, dictated by his own rude experience, that they did not know when they were beaten ; and so Christian hope refuses ever to believe that it is beaten. It is imperturbably buoyant : it makes the best of disaster. It believes that the darkest night will be followed by morning. And it is to a temper of this sort that Jesus reveals Himself ; it is the hopeful who in fact succeed. In Mary Magdalene that old promise was made good, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." He Whom she sought was not in His grave—not because human hands had rifled it, but because He was alive for evermore. He Whom she sought was not lying before her eyes, cold and motionless, because He was already close to her, bending over her, did she but know it, with a love greater than her own. "She turned herself back and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? Whom seekest thou ? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, If thou hast borne Him hence tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni !" She had recognised the voice. It was enough. He Whom she sought in the tomb was alive before her eyes, and her joy was fulfilled.

Mary Magdalene waiting before the empty tomb of Jesus reappears in each generation of Christians. It is not hard, at least for some of us, to recognise her among ourselves. She is the type of those souls which have a genuine love of religion, but which, from whatever cause, and in various ways, are for a time at any rate disappointed in it. And religious disappointment is hard to bear,—hard in proportion to the genuineness and sincerity of a man's character, because it is rightly felt that so much is in peril while this disappointment lasts ; for religion invites a larger stake—a more ruinous investment—so to put it—of thought and feeling than any other subject, in proportion to its transcendent importance ; and when those who have given up much, if not all else, that they may win this, think that they have missed what they hoped to have,—when those who, like the merchant in the parable, have sold their all to buy the pearl of great price, suppose, though it be, indeed, without reason and only for a while, that what they have purchased is a flint, the recoil of baffled hope is even terrible. Take the not uncommon case of a person who, for some years, for whatever reason, has paid scant attention to religious matters. He may not have broken God's law in any flagrant way : he may not have been the prodigal son of the parable : he may only have been an eager man of business, or an accomplished man of letters, or a great favourite in society, or a dreamer of unpractical but absorbing dreams. But, anyhow, he has lost sight of God. God has had—I do not say something less than His true place in the man's thought, but scarcely any place at all. Still he brings something of what he learnt from his mother, something of his early prayers, something of his

Bible, something, it may be, of the happiness and glow of a confirmation—of a first communion; and as he knows that the years are passing quickly, and that he must soon be in his grave, he trusts himself to the guidance of these memories of the past: he sets out—it is a painful, it is a creditable effort—he sets out to visit the sepulchre of his early life as a Christian, within which he trusts to find again the substance of religious well-being—the body of Jesus. He sets out with Mary Magdalene that he may renew his old homage to the Person of his Lord, and, like Mary, perchance he finds that the mouth of the sepulchre now wide open, and that the body of Jesus is gone. He recollects what he used to think about sacred subjects, but somehow his old thoughts will not recur to him. He cannot recognise the accustomed haunts of his spirit. The old language of thirty years ago is no longer to him what it was. There is something in the air, it seems, which has changed the aspect of what was once for him so full of grace and life, and he gazes on it as on the shell of an extinct creature—as on the ruined castle of a noble race. He opens his Bible, but somehow it is interesting to him only as literature. It is no more to him than Shakespeare, or some other work of human genius. It does not speak to his undying spirit: for him the body of Jesus is not there. He tries to pray, and prayer to him is only like poetry—an exercise which warms the soul, but which is not felt to be anything like actual converse with an unseen person: the body of Jesus is not there. He will do his best. He even approaches the Holy Communion, but here again he finds only a symbolical ceremony which recalls the dead past. There is no sense of contact with the living Lord of life. The body of Jesus, so far as his experience goes—he knows nothing of the absolute reality—the body of Jesus is not even there. Everywhere he sees traces of the old presence which haunts his memory. He counts up the napkins and the linen clothes, he measures the chamber in which, as his memory reports, his Lord had lain; but now there are voices about that tell him how much has changed since those days of which he is thinking. They say that much that then kept out light and air has been rolled away,—that many a scheme for setting a watch over the grave of some crucified truth has been defeated,—that many a truth, buried out of sight by the ignorance or the scorn of man, has risen to a new and glorious life, and that all is not really lost, as it seems to him. He listens to these voices, perplexed, half incredulous, yet not altogether without hope; but he still murmurs sadly that criticism, or controversy, or the spirit of the time, or religious movements of this kind or that, have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and He knows not where they have laid Him. Is it not possible that he is repeating the mistake—the very intelligible mistake—of Mary Magdalene,—that he is forgetting the meaning of the lapse of time? Mary assumed that she would find on Easter morning all that had been left, as it was left, on the late evening of Good Friday. She knew not that there are hours in the life of souls which may count for centuries, and that she had been living through such hours as these. She did not think that the body of her Saviour might be preserved to her, not in the tomb where they laid Him, but under new conditions, in the freedom of the glorified body which passed the sealed doors—which ascended to the heavens. Had Mary remained at the sepulchre from the burial onwards,—had she perseveringly sat, as did Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, in her tragic sorrow before the corpses of her slain sons,—had she sat continuously over against the sepulchre through the first and second nights after the death of the Lord—she must have witnessed the resurrection. She would have seen the stone rolled away: she would have seen the body, reanimated by the holy soul of Jesus, flash forth from the tomb into the darkness of the night. As it was, she had been

absent : she had lost the thread of continuity which linked the present to the past, and so she was perplexed. In time she found that her Lord was there as before, but in the garden—not in the grave,—but a living source of life—not a dead body to be covered with spices and ointments.

Nor need it be otherwise with such a case as I am considering. Believe it, my friend, if such there be here—and I have reason to think that there are at least some such—believe it, the old truth is what it was, but time has done its work, and under the guidance of God's providence the minds of men have been active around and about it. A generation has passed since you were a boy, and a generation counts for much in a busy age like this. What wonder if some of these associations of your boyish mind have been disturbed. What wonder if some misapprehensions have been corrected,—if some questionable prejudices still have to be abandoned,—if the relations between different fields of thought and knowledge have been elucidated during the interval? What wonder if some of this activity has resulted in what looks to you, at first sight, like dislocation or destruction, and if a great deal more has caused you very intelligible perplexity? Depend upon it, the body of Jesus is not lost. Do not despair because you cannot find it at the moment, amid the old conditions, between the grave-clothes and the napkin, in the sepulchre of a by-gone time. Distinguish between the unchanging, indestructible object of the religious life of the soul of man, and the ever shifting moods of human thought and feeling around it as the generations pass. Be patient, as Mary was patient,—hopeful, as Mary was hopeful,—and your share in Mary's tears will surely be followed by Mary's joy. It is encompassing a new mental and moral development of your spiritual nature. It is, perhaps, in nothing less than in an inward resurrection with Christ will that you recover for your Bible, for your prayers, for your communions, all of—or rather much more than—their old meaning. You will have exchanged Jesus in the tomb for Jesus in the garden—the religious thought and resolve of a boy for the religious horizons and aspirations of a ripened manhood.

And, perhaps, on this, as on every Easter day, there are certain characters which always need the comfort of the text. Easter, so full of joy in earth and in heaven—Easter, the queen of festivals—Easter day, “the day which the Lord hath made,” that His redeemed may “rejoice and be glad in it,”—comes to them never without a shade of disappointment. They have been looking forward to it. Through Lent they have been preparing for it as Christians who would find in it a blessing. And now it is upon them, and if they are to say the truth, it is without that felt illumination from above—that sense of the Divine and the Eternal—which they thought they had a special right to reckon on. They are standing, with Mary Magdalene, throughout the day outside the sepulchre. They complain that the Lord has been taken away from them, and laid they know not where. This may be partly true ; but, once more, patience ! Be earnest in seeking Christ, and you will surely find Him, if not on the festival itself, yet afterwards—if not in the public service of the Church, yet in private—if not in human words, yet in the sanctuary of your spirit's life—if not in warm and elevated feelings, yet in a sober and wholesome awe. Do not despair because for a moment the spiritual sepulchre seems to be empty. Rely on His love, on His goodness ; on His interest in you personally, on His chartered kindness to those who seek Him. Mary was so bitterly disappointed because she loved, but then it was her love which, in the end, forbade despair and conquered disappointment. And eighteen centuries have not emptied of its power that greatest of the promises of our Lord and Saviour, “If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come unto Him, and make Our abode with him.”

THE RESURRECTION, AN ESSENTIAL FACT OF THE GOSPEL.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 8TH, 1877.

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."--
1 COR. XV. 14.

LAST Sunday we were looking at the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the garden of the sepulchre, and with the eyes of St. Mary Magdalene. The first lesson of the Morning Service of to-day carries us, at a bound, over a quarter of a century to listen to discussions about the resurrection in one of the active centres of Greek life and thought. The text takes us to the Christian schools of Corinth, and St. Paul is pointing out to some ready, but not very far-sighted, disputants, the consequence of their denying the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. "How say some among you," he asks, "that there is no resurrection of the dead?" To deny this doctrine in the block, so the Apostle argues, is to deny that Christ Himself has risen, and, if He has really risen from the grave, it is impossible to say absolutely that there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, since here we have a representative instance of it. There were, it would appear, at Corinth some who did not shrink from encountering this argument by denying that even Christ our Lord Himself had really risen, and to these persons the Apostle points out that, however unconsciously, they were, in point of fact, giving up Christianity altogether. If Christ was still in His tomb, the errand of the Apostles to the world, and the obedience of the faithful to the doctrine which the Apostles preached, were equally based upon a vast delusion. "If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain : your faith is also vain."

It is pretty certain that the persons with whom St. Paul is arguing this matter were not converts from Judaism to the faith of Jesus Christ. A religious Jew—a Pharisee—whatever may be said of those Jewish free-thinkers, the Sadducees, had no difficulty whatever in professing his belief that the dead would rise. He had believed it before his conversion. How strong, how clear this Jewish faith was in a Jew before the coming of our Divine Lord, we see from the account of the martyrdoms in the Book of the Maccabees. Those pious Jews died under the hand of the Macedonian persecutor, firmly believing that they would rise again. And

when St. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and placed before the Sanhedrim, he knew how to strike the chord which would at once enlist the sympathies of a good half of his hearers. "Men and brethren," he cried, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee : of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." And the appeal was successful, "The scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man ; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." On the other hand, to the pagan Greek the idea of a coming resurrection of the dead was not merely novel : it was unwelcome ; it was opposed to the current Greek conceptions about the condition and the destiny of the dead. It would have seemed to a Greek a materialistic way of stating the very shadowy possibilities, which alone presented themselves to his mind, of any future existence. So palpable, so literal an assertion that man would live once more an unmutated life, with body as well as spirit hereafter, would have repelled the Greek, since the immortality of the soul itself, although an original truth of what we call natural religion, appears in Greek literature only as a fugitive speculation, however elegant and pathetic its rendering at times undoubtedly is.

The resurrection of man's body lay altogether beyond the frontier of customary Greek habits of thinking. When St. Paul began to preach the resurrection at Athens, his hearers missed his true meaning so entirely as to suppose that the word which expressed it was the name of a new deity. "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods," they said ; and this because he preached unto them Jesus Christ and the resurrection. And these deeply-rooted prejudices were carried by converts from Greek paganism into the Church of Christ, and they contributed largely to form the systems of error which took definite forms in the second century after Christ, and which are collectively described as gnostic. Ten years after, writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul mentions to his pupil, Timothy, two Greek teachers at Ephesus, Hymeneus and Philetus, "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already." These persons would seem to have wished, on the one hand, to keep to the language of the Apostolic Church, but on the other to get rid of its meaning and substance. They accepted a resurrection, but only a resurrection in the past,—not a resurrection in the future—only a moral resurrection of the soul, not a literal resurrection of the body. This, you observe, was the Greek feeling, still in rebellion against the faith, but not now wishing to come to an open rupture, and so attempting a sort of explanation which might hold on to the terms of a Christian profession, and, at the same time, rejecting realities which those terms were meant to convey.

Now, in Corinth we see the same sort of feeling, at work, but then the Corinthians were recent converts, and they did not all of them know what rebellion from God meant and involved. They thought that it was something like one of their own philosophies—something to be reviewed, discussed, partly accepted, partly rejected, quite at their pleasure. There was much in Christianity that they liked, and that they accepted without difficulty—nay, with enthusiasm ; but the resurrection of the dead, some of them, at any rate, could not tolerate. They asked in sharp, contemptuous scorn, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come ?" as if such questions had only to be raised in order to show a sensible people how absurd it was to expect an answer. Their difficulties about the resurrection arose partly out of their physical speculations—out of their theories about the universe—out of their ideas as to the nature and the destiny of being, but they did not imagine that in denying the resurrection of the dead they were breaking with essential

Christianity, or doing anything more or worse than rejecting a crude dogma of Jewish origin.

This was the state of mind with which St. Paul is dealing in the text, and his first object is to oblige his readers to understand what their words really come to. In all matters, to some extent—in religious matters especially—people use language without weighing its meaning—without asking themselves how much it involves and whither it will carry them. The Corinthians who denied the resurrection of the dead would like to have confined themselves, no doubt, to discussing the presumed physical impossibility of anything of the sort. But St. Paul cuts them short by saying, “if you mean what you say, you do mean that Christ Himself never really rose.” Some of the Corinthians were prepared, it would seem, to accept the consequence, but then they did not see why they could not deny even the resurrection of the Jesus Christ and yet continue, somehow, to be Christians. They did not wish in terms to give up Christianity. They flattered themselves that they still retained a firm hold upon all that was really essential in it—that they had only given up legendary additions to the simple story of the life of Christ—additions which their Greek science had pronounced impossible. They were still willing to believe in a Christ Who displayed before the eyes of men a perfect moral example—Who did many works of love, if not works of wonder—Who taught a doctrine which they recognised as heavenly—Who died a cruel and a shameful death. But that, being dead and buried, He rose again the third day according to the Scripture—this they deemed a superstitious apostolic addition to the simple truth. It was no part of that particular fragment of Christianity which approved itself to their order of intelligence as really fundamental, and so they rejected it without any kind of hesitation. It is to these persons that St. Paul says solemnly, “If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain.” St. Paul, you see, will not allow that this faith in a Christ Who has never risen from His grave is any Christianity at all. According to him, if it is a religion at all, it is another religion : it has nothing to do with the faith which is preached by the Apostles. These Corinthians might still talk about our Lord Jesus Christ : they might still claim the honours and risks of the Christian name : they might even imagine that they differed only from the Apostles in being more clear-sighted and better informed without being less tender-hearted and less devout. But St. Paul will allow nothing of the kind. He did not let them—that is his motive—did not let them deceive themselves in a matter of such momentous import. To deny Christ’s resurrection is to abandon Christianity outright : is to give up the core and heart of the faith. The beliefs that still remain may have an interest of their own, but it is the interest which is inspired by a corpse—which may, indeed, recall the past, but which has no longer its place in the land of the living.

“Why,” it may be asked—“why should this be the case? Why cannot a man still be a Christian believer who rejects the resurrection of Jesus Christ? How is it that the rejection of this truth can make the faith which still clings to much else, but denies this particular doctrine, vain or empty?” The answer is, “Because the resurrection of Christ is the foundation-fact upon which the Christian creed rests in an intelligent and believing soul.” If any one of the Apostles had been asked how it was that they knew that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah—the eternal Son of God—the Saviour of the world, by Whose teaching and example mankind were to be enlightened, by Whose blood men were to be redeemed, to Whom all the children of men were bound to pay the homage of their obedience and their love—the answer would have been, “Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.” Read through those

sermons, when you go home, which are reported at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, and observe how one after another they base the claim of Jesus Christ to love and obedience upon the fact of the resurrection—the fact to which the Apostles themselves, while they were preaching, bore a personal witness. In the eyes of the Apostles the resurrection of Jesus was God's visible interference designed to certify the true mission and the true claims of Jesus. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself had appealed beforehand to this very certificate. The sign which He had given to an unbelieving generation—the proof that He came from God—was that He would raise the temple of His body from the dead in three days, and, therefore, the Apostles began with preaching this fact of the resurrection. They virtually said to their hearers, "You see, He has been as good as His word. He has risen from the dead; and, therefore, let us believe in Him." And thus, as St Paul observed, He was proclaimed to be the Son of God with power according to His holy, Divine nature by the resurrection from the dead.

But the resurrection does not merely, as the Apostles handle it, light up the past. It is an earnest of the future; it is the warrant that He Who rose will come to judge us. When St. Paul has told the Athenians that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained, he naturally reflects that a critical and sceptical audience will ask what proof there is to be alleged in favour of so startling an announcement. Accordingly he adds, "Of this God has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Jesus from the dead." The Apostles in preaching the faith are like those architects who make a stone roof of wide area depend for its support upon a central pillar. They know that the pillar is strong enough for its work. They were themselves appointed to be witnesses of the resurrection. They never met the world without bearing their testimony. They knew that, if the resurrection was sincerely believed, all else in the Christian creed would hold good. They knew also that, if the resurrection of Christ was rejected, nothing else could be, in the long run, received at all.

Suppose, for instance, that one of these Corinthian disputants had said, "I do not want to believe in Christ's resurrection, but I do not wish to reject the benefits of His death." The Apostle would have asked, "What benefits do you mean? What becomes of the death of Christ if it was not followed by His resurrection?" It at once descends to the level of a purely human event. It is in no way more remarkable than the death of any other high-minded and disinterested man for a cause to which he is attached. It may have—it undoubtedly still has—the importance of a high moral example of devotion to truth, to charity, to justice, but the language which the Apostles use about it, and which Christendom has ever believed, becomes at once unmeaning. Why should the death of a mere man whose body has mouldered in his grave be a power on earth and in heaven, mighty to cleanse from guilt and to secure Divine pardon? St. Paul's bones rest somewhere in, or near, the great city where they slew him some thirty-five years after his Master's death, but who could speak of Paul as dying for his followers, or for the ungodly—as bearing their sins in his own body—as being set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood? Who would dare to say that Christians are reconciled to God by the death of St. Paul, or that by him they had received the atonement, or that Paul is a propitiation for their sins, and not for theirs only, but also for the sins of the whole world, or that Paul gave himself a ransom for all? Every Christian believer feels the shocking profanity of applying this language to any other than the Divine Redeemer. But why, I ask, is it so profane? Because it is the Divine Person of Christ

Who died on Calvary which gives such meaning to His atoning death. "Ye were not redeemed," exclaims St. Peter, "with corruptible things as silver and gold"—(he might have added, "or with the blood of a mere human victim")—"but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and immaculate." "If God," argues St. Paul, "spared not His Own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" But, then, how do we know that the Sufferer on Calvary was God's Own Son. The answer is, "By the resurrection." The resurrection, if I may dare so to speak, put the death of Jesus Christ before the world in its true light. It was an immense reversal of the *primâ facie* appearances of the event. What had looked like a defeat was soon to be a triumph. What seemed the execution of a condemned criminal was recognised as an awful transaction, having immense results on earth and in heaven throughout all time. If Christ was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. This was the key-note of the apostolic teaching. The resurrection had lifted His death to a higher or, rather, to an altogether different level from that of any human sufferer. But then, if the resurrection is denied, all the apostolic language about the atonement becomes a tissue of mystical exaggerations, which, as applied to the death of a mere man, are worse than unintelligible. This consequence, the Corinthians might not have seen at once, but, at any rate, their faith in the atonement was already undermined by their disbelief in the resurrection of the crucified Christ.

But suppose the Corinthian objector to say, "Very well, we will give up the atonement, but we will continue to believe in the beauty of Christ's language and example. This, after all, is, in our opinion, the really essential thing in Christianity. The rest may go, and we shall not, perhaps, be the worse for losing it." Here St. Paul would have explained that in order to recognise the beauty of Christ's language and example there was no necessity for faith, properly so called, at all. Faith is an acceptance of the unseen upon sufficient testimony. Faith is an effort of some sort: it is a venture. Its proper object is a something which does not lie within the range of experience. You and I do not need faith or anything but ordinary judgment and common moral sense in order to do justice to the good sayings and good actions of anyone among the many excellent people who may be named as having died some twenty or thirty years ago. We knew enough about them on very good evidence to enable us to give full play to our admiration: we admire them accordingly. It would be absurd to call them objects of faith. This is what St. Paul would have said—that faith, which is an instrument of the soul's spiritual life, is not wanted for any such purpose as the Corinthian objectors might have pleaded. But might he not, would he not, have gone a step farther? Must he not have pointed out that to deny the resurrection and, at the same time, to profess to admire the words of Christ, or the example of Christ, was, really, impossible. Did not our Lord, more than once, when challenged for a sign or warrant of His claims, say that He would be put to death and rise again the third day? Remark—the third day. There is a precision in the announcement which forbids figurative interpretation of the language, as if, forsooth, such language could be satisfied by the remote triumph of Christ's name or doctrine while His body mouldered in the grave. No, it is impossible to admire some of His best attested words if His resurrection be denied. Let me add, it is impossible to admire His example. Upon what kind of ground can we explain or justify His inviting the love and trust and homage of all those pious and tender souls who thronged around Him, if, in reality, He was no more than one of themselves—if He had not in

Himself some source and supply of strength which was more than human ; "We preach not ourselves," says His Apostle. But *He*, the Master, says, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden. I am the Light of the world. I am the true Vine. I am the good Shepherd. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers.*" The constant reiterated self-assertion of Jesus Christ in the face of His own precepts about the beauty of being humble and self-forgetting and retiring is to be explained by the inward necessity laid upon Him by His consciousness of His Divine personality of which His resurrection was the visible witness to the world. Deny His resurrection and His character, as we have it in the Gospels, requires nothing less than reconstruction, if it is not to be met by the moral sense of men with some very different judgment indeed from that of sympathy and admiration.

These, then, are some of the grounds on which St. Paul would have maintained that if Christ be not risen the faith of Christians is vain.

But observe the character of his argument—an argument from the consequences of rejecting the resurrection. Elsewhere he proves the resurrection directly. It may be inferred, not merely from the words of Jesus—from the language of prophecy, but especially, and above all, from the actual experience of eye-witnesses who might be counted by hundreds, and many of whom were living when the Apostle wrote. Here St. Paul says, "See what will happen if you reject Christ's resurrection. You will have to give up Christianity altogether. If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain : your faith is also vain. You Corinthians are in a dilemma. You must go forward or you must go back. You must either believe with us Apostles in the resurrection of Christ and in the resurrection of the dead, which is its consequence ; or you must fall back into the darkness at which you emerged at your conversion." This is a kind of argument which, if it were not being handled by an inspired Apostle, we should describe as trenchant. Plainly it is intended to cut discussion short—to bring matters to an issue by a short and easy method. St. Paul feels that something must be said which will not be forgotten. He feels as he felt when he told the Galatians, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," or "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed," or when he said to the Corinthians, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maran-atha." It was in the same state of mind—with the same general intention, namely, of rousing dull minds by some vivid expressions to see how matters really stood—that he wrote, "If Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain ; your faith is also vain."

It may be said—it has been said—that arguments of this kind are inconsiderate and unsuccessful,—first, that they crush out with their relentless logic the still surviving faith of weak but inconsequent believers—that they forget the Divine injunction about not quenching the smoking flax or breaking the bruised reed ; and, secondly, that they do not always succeed, that they rouse opposition, almost resentment—among persons of independence of character, who, because independent of character, are not, therefore, hostile to religion,—that in some cases they entirely defeat the object with which they are used, as of the alternatives presented the one is taken which is really designed to enforce the other. The lever breaks in the workman's hand just as it is being applied.

And this, it must be granted, is true enough of the employment of such arguments in a great many cases among ourselves. No doubt there are writers and talkers who take pleasure in forcing people, as they say, to be logical and consistent. Whatever may be the sort of consistency that is

enforced, these writers and talkers are like a reckless man riding at full tilt down a street full of children at play : they are thinking only of their own feat and prowess,—nothing of the consequences. Often, indeed, we must know—some of us—that the employment of such intellectual weapons is very cruel. They leave wounds and doubts in tender minds which are healed only slowly, or never healed at all. They may be very fine feats of reason, but, like the sports of ancient kings, they are indulged at the cost of the defenceless and the weak. Too seldom, indeed, do many speakers and writers, in private and in public, track out the effect of their reckless words in the shattered hopes, in the distressed consciences, in the weakened resolves, which are really caused by them. But granting all this, it does not, by any means, follow that arguments like that of St. Paul—"You must believe more than you do, or you certainly will cease to be a Christian"—are not sometimes necessary—ay, charitable. They are like those critical operations in surgery which no man would undertake or undergo without adequate necessity, but which are sometimes necessary to saving life. Everything depends upon the spirit in which—upon the purpose with which—an argument like this is used. It may be used as a vain display of personal power—as a means of achieving intellectual victory. In this case nothing can well be more criminal. It may be used in a spirit of true charity in order to save a soul which has got into a dreamland, and which mistakes the picture formed in its own fancy for the eternal truths. In this case nothing can be more charitable. The knife may be employed by a scientific surgeon to save a patient's life by a timely operation, or by a bungler who is thinking of his professional reputation, or by a burglar to cut a man's throat. St. Paul, who watched with such tender solicitude over the scruples of the weak brethren in Rome and in Corinth, would never have forced his hearers or readers, to choose between the acceptance of one particular doctrine, and the rejection of the Christian faith, except under the pressure of the sternest necessity. He, we may be certain, had fully counted the risks. He knew what the effect would be on those whom he addressed. He would never have placed them in the dilemma unless he had been satisfied that they loved their faith better than their speculations,—that they would accept the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ when they found that to reject it was to reject Christianity. A serious logical operation was needed. The Apostle knew that the patient could bear it.

In conclusion, there are two practical considerations to be carried away.

First, brethren, reflect how dangerous it is to pick and to choose in the things of God. It is not too much to say that some persons who would be distressed at the idea that they are bad Christians have no adequate notion at all of the truth that the Christian revelation, if accepted at all, must be accepted as a whole. They believe and think as if, in approaching the truths which God has set before us through His blessed Son, and in His word, they were, like intending purchasers entering a shop, perfectly at liberty to choose whatever might strike their taste and fancy, and to reject the rest. The question of believing or of rejecting belief appears to them to be a matter to be decided mainly by personal bias or inclinations, although, of course, it is in reality as unreasonable to do this as it is irreverent. "Unreasonable," I say, because all really revealed truth rests exactly on the same ground, and recommends itself equally to a perfectly balanced mind ; and irreverent because to reject any part of revelation is, virtually, to tell the Divine Revealer that He has set before the mind of His creature that which is either unmeaning or incredible. At the same time it is true that some truths may be rejected with less ruin to the entire fabric of faith than may others, just as certain limbs of the human body may be amputated without destroying life, although they impair its

perfectness, while others—the head, for example—cannot be parted with without instant death. Thus two mistakes may be made about the doctrine of grace—about the meaning of large portions of Scripture—without necessarily leading to fatal consequences, but to reject the resurrection is to cut at the very root of Christian belief: it is to cease, as far as thought and feeling go, to be a Christian. A Christ Who never rose from His grave, is not the Christ of the Bible—not the Christ of Christendom. Such a Christ has nothing in common with our Divine Saviour but the name.

And, secondly and lastly, ask yourselves, each one, “What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean to me? How much of my life, of my thought, of my resolve, day by day, is influenced by it?” Put to yourselves the supposition—for a Christian, the dreadful, the impossible supposition—that the resurrection should be shown to be untrue. What would you have lost? Try to estimate the difference in your thoughts and lives which the loss of this truth would involve? We know what the death of such and such a relation would mean to us. We can calculate almost the exact effect by thinking over our habits of life throughout one day. We know what the reduction of our means of living to such and such a sum would involve—in the loss of comforts—in the means of doing good. What then would be the effect upon us of the withdrawal—if we could conceive it possible—of the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the creed and from the Bible? How would it touch our hold of the other Christian truths? How would it change our thoughts about the future—about the dead—about the world unseen—about our own death, and all that will follow it? How would it touch our thoughts and feelings throughout the day as if we are Christians they move around the person of our unseen but never absent Lord and Saviour? If we get this question honestly answered, we may form a tolerably fair estimate of the value of our faith in Christ’s resurrection at this moment. If we do indeed believe that He has risen,—that stupendous faith does and must mould thought, feeling, resolve, in all kinds of ways. If we do believe that He is risen and living, then we know that to part with this faith would be to the life of our spirits what, if the thing were possible, the extinction of the sun’s light and warmth in the heavens would be to all beings that grow and breathe upon the surface of the earth.

If Jesus Christ risen is indeed the object of our faith, then our religion is not merely the critical study of an ancient sacred literature: it is a vitally distinct thing from that. It is the communion of our spirits with a Divine and everlasting Being. It is faith in the resurrection which marks our present relations to Jesus Christ as something altogether different from those which we have to the famous dead who have in past years filled the thoughts and governed the history of mankind. At the beginning of this century—(it is natural to remember it within these walls)—Nelson and Wellington were names second to none among those who claimed the attention of the world. Where are they now? Their dust moulders beneath your feet. Where are they now? Their disembodied spirits are waiting, we know not exactly where, for the hour of the judgment. But where is Jesus Christ? He, risen from His grave—arrayed in His glorious manhood—is seated on the throne of heaven. He is the mid-point—the centre of the great empire of living souls. He is in communication, constant and intimate, with myriads of beings to whom, by His death, and by His triumph over death, and by His enduring and exhaustless life, He is made Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. Yes, to believe in the risen Jesus is to live beneath a sky which is indeed bright. This is to believe that He is alive for evermore, and that He has the keys of hell and of death.

PATIENCE UNDER UNDESERVED WRONG.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 15TH, 1877.

"This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully."—1 Pet. ii. 19.

THE Epistle for to-day, it has been suggested, would have been better suited for one of the Sundays before Easter, if not for Good Friday itself. The subject of this Epistle is patience under undeserved wrong as illustrated by the example of our suffering and sinless Lord. Such a subject does seem, at first sight, out of keeping with the thoughts and joys of the Easter season; but the truth is that in those early days when, with a few exceptions, our present Epistles and Gospels were selected, the death and resurrection of Christ were looked upon, as indeed they are treated in Holy Scripture, as events inseparably connected with each other—as two sides or aspects of a single whole—as the self-sacrifice and triumph involved in one supreme effort of the divine love manifested towards ruined man. And thus it is that, even when Easter has come and gone, these lesser lessons of Good Friday are heard echoing down the weeks which follow the great festival. It seems as though the Church of God felt that she could not at the time learn all that the passion of her Lord was meant to teach her, so she must return to the scene of His sorrow to gather up what had escaped her amid the distractions and bewilderment of the day of His death. Certainly this applies to to-day's services. The collect speaks of Christ as a sacrifice for sin. In the Gospel He is the Good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep; and here in the Epistle He is the Great Sufferer, Who, by His sublime endurance, teaches patience—teaches resignation—to those who suffer wrongfully throughout all time.

If we look at the context of this passage in our Bibles, we observe, first of all,
No. 943.

that St. Peter is writing, not as the extract appointed for the Epistle might suggest, to Christians in general, but to one particular class of Christians—to household slaves. "Slaves," he begins, "be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward ; for," he adds, "this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Our translation "servants" was, perhaps, intended to make the passage practically useful, by suggesting its application to that class among ourselves who have this in common with the ancient slaves—that they have duties to perform to a human master. But in truth the word servant, with all its modern associations, misleads us seriously here as to the Apostle's meaning. A servant in an English house has little indeed in common with the slave of that old world society for which St. Paul wrote. A servant is a free man or woman who undertakes to do a certain kind and amount of work in return for a certain stipend. This undertaking is a contract. It may be brought to an end by giving due notice at any moment. It involves, while it lasts, no forfeiture of the protection which the law extends equally to servant and to master. Long before an English servant suffered wrongfully, in the sense contemplated by St. Peter, the law would step in and punish any personal assault, or cruelty, or withholding of covenanted salary on the part of the master, with impartial justice. Far otherwise was it with the ancient slave. He had no rights before the law. He was looked upon, so a great writer of antiquity puts it, as an animate piece of property. He was bought just like the cattle in the home-stand or the furniture about the room, if, indeed, he was not born and bred on the estate. He was taught a profession, that he might be useful to his master, or might fetch a high price if he was sent to a sale. He was a poet, a jailor, a cabinet-maker, an architect, a physician, a mechanic, a private attendant, a hair-dresser, a field-labourer, an epigrammatist, just as the case might be. He was let out to a friend, or he was sold for a song, or he was flogged to death, or he was crucified, or he was made a pet of, just as the caprice of his own owner might dictate. He too had his feelings, his attachments, like the rest of us, but he might be willed away from the associations of a lifetime to a strange owner in a distant home without a suspicion of his destiny ; or he might, quite in his old age, pass, at the death of some kind and considerate master to a young heir, selfish and reckless, who viewed him merely as worn-out property, and treated him with indifference and cruelty. Worst of all was the denial to him of those sacred rights which marriage carries with it. He, too, married, yet his wife and children were his only on sufferance, and his family might be broken up at a moment's notice to fill the purse or to gratify the passions of a selfish owner. And all this while the slave was not unfrequently, in everything but his civil position, his master's superior—a man of wider cultivation, of larger capacities, of finer moral make, of nobler sympathies. He might be an Epictetus ; he might have those rarer gifts and graces which are wont to win the homage even of the best among mankind. It matters not : he had no rights before the law—no rights against brutal wrong—no claim which would be recognized by public opinion as entitling him to consideration and justice. Not seldom his very superiority was his ruin. It moved the jealousy or it stimulated the caprice of his owner to some exceptional act of cruelty and oppression. Certainly, now and then, the natural conscience of pagan rulers moved them to do something—it was little enough—to improve the condition of the slave. At one time the old pagan Roman law restrained the right of the master to kill a slave.

without some assignable cause : at another it pledged him to get an authorisation from the magistrate. At a later period—this was when Christianity had made itself felt—it only allowed him to afflict severe bodily punishment. In the same way custom allowed the slave to have a little property. Legally, of course a man who was himself property could not hold property. And in this way sometimes he would save money to buy his freedom. But all this came to very little. The cruelty and degradation attendant on slavery were gigantic, and it produced, from time to time, wild attempts at resistance, sometimes on a terrific scale, when tens of thousands of armed slaves, under some impatient leader, sought freedom from their oppressors in death on the field of battle, or in victory. In the age of the Apostles, no social question was more immediately pressing throughout the Roman empire than this question of slavery.

When, then, the Apostles addressed themselves to the conversion of the world, they found at once that they had this question on their hands. Christianity was especially the religion of the suffering and the ill-used, and the slaves became converts in numbers. And as St. Peter thinks over his Jewish flock of converts to Christianity throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, he remembers that multitudes of them were slaves—Christian slaves in pagan households. They have, he reflects, a great claim upon his charity. What should help them to bear the hardships of their lot if the faith and Church of Christ does not help them? The Apostle scans them over in his thought, smarting, as they were, under a sense of accumulated wrong—crushed down, as they were, beneath an iron system, which looked to themselves, no doubt, and to their masters, so fashioned as if it would last for ever. What can he say to them that will lighten their dreary prison-house,—that will suggest to them the great consecration of unmerited sorrow by the Divine Sufferer, and the hope of a brighter world hereafter? “This,” he will say,—“This is thank-worthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

St. Peter teaches that suffering is thankworthy, a gift from God, and acceptable in turn to him, if it be accompanied by two conditions. First of all, it must be undeserved. A slave, too, might be punished for doing what would merit punishment in a free man. A slave, too, might be violent, or abusive, or careless about that which belonged to others, or intemperate, or dishonest, or treacherous. If punished for offences of this kind, he might not complain. “What glory is it,” asks St. Peter, “if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?” The law, the eternal law, that punishment follows wrong-doing, is not suspended in the case of the slave. And, secondly, such suffering must be for conscience toward God. It must be borne for God’s cause and sake, and with a good hope of God’s approval. This it is which makes pain at once bearable and bracing, when the conscience of the sufferer can ask the Perfect Moral Being to take note of it, just as David does in so many of his psalms. “Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me. Lord, be Thou my helper.” Mere suffering, which a man dares not offer to God, though it be borne patiently through physical courage, through “pluck,” as we term it, has no spiritual value. “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” This is the Consecration Prayer, uttered on the cross—uttered, if in other language, wherever men suffer for conscience toward God ; and by it suffering is changed—changed assuredly into moral victory.

In short, St. Peter says to the Christian slaves, “If you like you can turn the

hardships of your lot into very choice blessings. Suffering is not itself necessarily an evil : it may be a signal good. If it is undeserved, so much the better for its religious efficacy : it is a certificate of honour sent you down from God. Let it be accepted as from Him, and for His sake. It becomes at once a great grace ; it is a token of nearer likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ." And St. Paul deals with this question in a similar spirit. He bids the slaves at Ephesus to be obedient to their masters, "not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the slaves of Christ." He uses the very same terms in addressing the slaves at Colosse. He desires Titus, as bishop in Crete, to exhort slaves "to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them in all things ; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Writing to Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, he desires, generally, that slaves should count their masters worthy of all honour, and, in particular, that slaves belonging to Christian masters are not to think the worse of their masters because they are brethren who yet keep slaves ; but rather do them service, because they are Christian believers, and objects of the life of God. He advises the Corinthian slaves not to care for the circumstance of slavery, but, if they can be free, to use their opportunity. Everywhere the advice which he gives is substantially this,—submit and obey cheerfully ; endure patiently ; remember that time is very short ; remember that the accidents of this outward condition matter little as compared with our state in eternity.

And here it may be asked, "Why did not the Apostles denounce slavery as an intolerable wrong ? Why did they trifle with it, and allow the Church which succeeded them to trifle with it ? Why did they seem, indirectly at least, to sanction it, by advising slaves to honour and obey their owners ? Was not this of the nature of a compromise between good and evil—between the high principles of Christian morality on the one hand, and the debased institutions of heathen life on the other ? Would it not have been better to break with slavery at once and altogether ? better for the honour of the Christian revelation, better for the best interest of man ?" Certainly, my brethren, nothing can well be more antipathetic than the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of slavery ; for slavery postulates an essential distinction between man and man, which is unknown to the Gospel. The Gospel proclaims the unity of the human race, and the equality of all its members before God. The Gospel is based upon, and it consecrates, the laws of God in nature ; and slavery, on the other hand, is distinctly unnatural : it is a rejection of the fundamental equality of man. It often, and very consistently, professes to reject belief in the unity of the human race. So slavery, the deepest of all distinctions between human beings, is the distinction between the man who is his own owner and the man who is owned by another. "In Christ Jesus," exclaims the Apostle, "there is neither bond nor free." But the exact question which the Apostles had to consider was not whether slavery was a bad social institution, or theoretically indefensible, but this—whether slavery necessarily ruined the prospects of the human soul. The business of the Apostles, you observe, lay rather with the other world than with this—with this world just so far as it bore upon the other. What a man's condition was, or was not, in this world, mattered little in an Apostle's judgment, if the man could secure the true end of his being in the world to come. And if this question about the bearing of slavery upon human salvation was raised there could be no doubt about the answer. A slave might be a Christian—he might be the best of Christians—easily enough. If he was

harshly treated, that was not peculiar to his condition of life : it might even promote his sanctification. If he was tempted to do wrong, St. James would tell him that he should count this all joy, knowing that the trial of his faith worketh endurance. If he had to choose between sinful compliance with a master's will and punishment, though that punishment were death, he, with his eyes fixed on the Divine Sufferer, would know his part. The grace of God may make the soul of man independent of outward circumstances ; and there is no real slavery when the soul is free. And it often happens that a Christian slave would live more entirely in and for a better world than other Christians, because, in this world, there was so very little to win the homage of his heart. To the slave-owner, undoubtedly, slavery was more fraught with spiritual danger than to the slave himself ; but, however great the temptations of the position, they were, after all, only great temptations. A master of slaves might be just, generous, chaste, charitable, humble, tender-hearted, true. Slavery, then, in Christian eyes, although undoubtedly bad, is not bad in the sense in which a sinful practice is bad,—something in which a Christian can, under any circumstances, keep no terms. It may tend to multiply temptations : it can not compel to actual sin, since sin is only possible when the will consents.

At the same time, although the Apostles were working, as I have said, for another world, in the course of doing so, and, as it were, incidentally, they were destined to be, from the nature of the case, great social reformers in this. They could not but detest slavery, but how was it to be done away with ? Was it to be by some sudden revolutionary effort, supposing the thing to be possible ? Was it to be by the influence of new principles—first upon the opinions of men, and then upon the structure of society ? The Apostles chose the latter method, but it was a method which took time. The Apostles trusted to the infiltration of new principles into the thoughts and actions of men, and not to those violent and tragical catastrophes, which, even when they succeed, succeed amid ruins. It was not the duty of the Gospel to proclaim a social war. There were sects at that time nearly related to Judaism. The Essenes and Therapeutæ they were called, and their teaching was certainly very familiar to St. Paul—sects which held that the slave should at once refuse all obedience to his master, in the name of human rights. But slaves, maddened by oppression into rebellion against order, would not, in that age, at least, have put an end to slavery. It was better to teach a higher ideal of life, both to the slave and to the master, and meanwhile to proclaim the truth, " This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." From the first, brethren, slavery was so changed when in Christian hands as to lose most of its worst features. Christian slave-masters at Ephesus are reminded by St. Paul that they have a Master also in heaven : neither is there respect of persons with Him. The Church was incessantly, after the pattern of the Apostle, pleading with Philemon for indulgence towards Onesimus. Already, in her eyes, the slave of the civil law was the great freed man of Christ. In a Christian household, the marriage tie between slaves was respected as being what Christ's law had made it—sacred and indissoluble. In Christian households, a hundred courtesies softened the hardship of the legal relation between master and slave. The sense of a common brotherhood in Christ had already sapped the idea of any radical inequality between them. Did they not both owe their existence to the same creative love ? Were they not both redeemed by the same atoning blood ? Were they not both sanctified by the

same regenerating and purifying Spirit? Did they not kneel side by side to receive the body of their common Lord? Were they not alike striving day by day to deepen the graces of faith, hope, and charity in their souls? Did they not look forward to being together for eternity in a common home in heaven? And thus it happened that Christian slaves sometimes rose even to high places in the ministry of the Church. Callistus, the bishop of Rome at the beginning of the third century, was a slave. Thus it happened that slaves were sometimes martyrs for Christ. Blandina, of Lyons, who died for Christ in the year 177, was a Christian slave girl, and martyrdom, the highest act of moral freedom of which man is ever capable—martyrdom relieved the degradation of slavery enormously, and reduced it within the Church almost to a vanishing point. And then there came the legislation of the Christian councils, and of the Christian emperors. It is welcome on a day like this to remember how, in this great field of human improvement, religion and law went for centuries hand in hand,—religion seeking ever and anon the assistance of law,—law drawing its best inspirations, in such codes as those of Theodosius and Justinian, from the guidance of religion, until at last slavery ceased within the precincts of civilisation, though, alas, it has lingered on to our own days as a result of selfish commercial enterprise pursued among the feebler races of mankind.

But then, it may be asked, "Does not the advice of the Apostle to submit quietly to wrong destroy manliness and force of character if it is acted on? Does it not tend to create a race of effeminate, spiritless men, who may indeed give little trouble to a bad institution or to a bad government, but who have parted with all that can be called moral strength? The question, my brethren, is, In what does moral strength really consist? It is sometimes taken for granted that moral strength must catch the eye—must strike upon the ear—must inflict itself obtrusively upon the imagination,—that it must be something bustling, pushing, demonstrative, aggressive,—that it must, at least, have colour, body, incident, to recommend it. No, this is not the case. Moral strength may be the exact reverse of all this, and that when it is found in its very finest forms. When it makes no show whatever, and is utterly passive, it is often at its best. Many a man, who can act with great courage in moments of personal danger in a struggle with a brigand, or amid the timbers of a burning house, can not suffer an illness as bravely and as patiently as his little girl. The courage which was shown by the man who, after seeing to the safety of the women and children on board, went down in the *Birkenhead* was greater than the courage of the men who charged at Balaclava. Animal effort, or the excitement of a great crisis, makes courage easy. The hardest thing very often is to do nothing,—to await the approach of danger or death, and yet not to lose nerve and self-possession. No moral strength in the whole history of our race ever approached that which was displayed on Calvary,—when all that was before Him was present from the first to the mind of the Divine Victim, who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to him that judgeth righteously."

On the other hand, nothing that has been said, I trust, will be so misconstrued as to be taken to imply that cruelty, tyranny, oppression, are in any sense agreeable to the mind of God. He permits these things among men from time to time, just as He permits much else that is evil, for His own wise ends. He brings good out of them, yet He condemns them, and, by and by, He will punish them. Who can read the Jewish prophets and not mark how one after

another they maintain the cause of the helpless, whether against bad Jewish kings or against heathen conquerors? Who can use the psalter—especially the psalms of David himself—without sharing the fire of his moral indignation against oppression and wrong? If St. Peter advises oppressed slaves to endure grief, suffering wrongfully, for conscience towards God, because this is acceptable with God, he does not, therefore, sanction the caprice or the cruelty of the master. Nowhere does the Gospel repeal the stern sentence which prophet and psalmist alike uttered against public or private tyrants. “Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief; whereas the goodness of God endureth yet daily? Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever. He shall take thee and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living.” Nowhere is it implied in the Bible that the systematic oppression of man by man has vested rights in the universe of God, or that circumstances and positions which permit it are even tolerable unless they are perpetuated for very different purposes indeed. The days will come when Englishmen will look back to the abolition of the slave trade by the English Parliament as a higher title to national glory than Trafalgar or Waterloo—perhaps as the very greatest in the course of our civil history. Wilberforce and Clarkson will rank even before those celebrated commanders to whose courage and genius, under God, we owe the independence of our country. Great days they were when English gentlemen faced every species of insult and unpopularity in pursuit of one noble and disinterested object,—when England, not without long struggling and hesitation, at length deliberately sacrificed her material interest, to the amount of thirty millions of money, that she might secure freedom and well-being to the enslaved races of Africa.

Have there not been symptoms of late, that—I do not say the English people, but some sections of English society, have lost something of this generous impatience of cruel wrong—have learnt to listen to the cries of anguish raised by millions of their fellow creatures, and to listen—I will not say unmoved, but without exerting themselves to help them? Be this as it may, the truth announced by St. Peter is always widely applicable in every age and country. Among ourselves there are probably—almost certainly—some who, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. There are no slaves, thank God, on English soil, but there are multitudes of persons in positions of dependance whose lives can easily be made miserable by the cruel ingenuity of their betters, and too often for no worse crime than that of obeying a higher sense of right. Every rank in society has its petty tyrants and its secret confessorships. To suffer wrongfully for conscience towards God is the monopoly of no one class. There is a cadet of a noble family who will not consent to a transaction which he knows to be unjust, and he is cut off with a shilling. Here is an apprentice or a clerk in a large city house who will not abandon the duties and the restraints of the Christian life in deference to pressure, or to abuse, or to ridicule, and he has a hard time of it. Yonder is a governess who has a higher vision of life and duty than her wealthy and ostentatious employer, it may be, knows of; or a clergyman, who feels keenly the real character of the revelation of God in Christ, and the tremendous issues of life and death—too keenly far to acquiesce in some popular but shallow misrepresentation of the Gospel which makes his people comfortable without bringing them really nearer to God. These, and such as these, must, for conscience’ sake towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. Law can do but little—almost nothing—

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for them. The province of law lies outside the spheres of the heart and the conscience. The whole world of inner motive is beyond it. But religion can do much—it can do everything—by pointing to the crucified and risen Prince of that vast company in all ages who, for conscience' sake towards God, have endured grief, suffering wrongfully—by pointing to the unapproached bitterness of His sorrow—by pointing to the completeness and the glory of his triumph.

THE NATURAL IMMORTALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 22ND, 1877.

“Because I live, ye shall live also.”—JOHN xiv. 19.

THIS saying of our Lord in the supper-room, like so much else which He uttered there, is only to be understood in the light of His resurrection and ascension into heaven. When He said “Because I live,” He had death immediately before Him. He was taking the measure of death. Death was to be no real interruption of His ever-continuing life. Death with all its physical, its mental, miseries—death was only an incident in His being; it was in no sense its close. Already He sees the resurrection beyond and He exclaims “I live.” It was not possible, as St. Peter puts it, that He, the Prince of Life, should be holden of death. And so He treats death as an already vanquished enemy which cannot have any lasting effect upon His indestructible life. And, farther, this life of His, inaccessible as it was to any permanent injury—enduring, as it was to endure, beyond the cross and the grave—is the cause of ours. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” He describes what He knows to be impending—“Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more.” He would be hidden away in the grave from the eyes of men. He adds, “but ye see Me.” His disciples would see Him: first, with their bodily eyes during the forty days after His resurrection, and next with the eyes of faith throughout all the ages until He comes to judgment; and thus “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Assured of the enduring continuity of His life, the disciples might be certain—quite certain—of their own. Because He lives after His resurrection—after His ascension in the life of glory, therefore the disciples, in whatever sense, shall live also.

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Now here, my brethren, let us observe, first of all, what our Saviour's words do not mean. They do not mean that the immortality of the soul of man is dependent upon the redemptive work or upon the glorified life of Jesus Christ. Man is an immortal being, just as he is a thinking and a feeling being, by the original terms of his nature. God has made man immortal whether for weal or woe. Whether man is redeemed or not, whether he is sanctified or not, he will exist for ever. God might have made man a being subject to annihilation. He has given Him a soul which is indestructible; and this quality of the soul of man is just as much a part of man's nature as are the limbs of his body or the peculiarities of his mind. Of late we have heard something of a phrase, new, if I mistake not, to Christian ears,—“conditional immortality.” We are told that man is not immortal by the terms of his nature,—that he may become immortal if he is saved by Christ. Unredeemed man—man in a state of nature, so we are told—becomes extinct, if not at death, yet very shortly afterwards when anything that may survive death will fade away into nothingness. This, it is said, is more in keeping with what we see around us, than the old Christian doctrine that every human being will necessarily exist, in whatever condition, for ever. Everything around us changes, decays, passes away, and this dissolution of all the organised forms of matter seems, it is suggested, to forewarn man of his own approaching and complete destruction unless indeed some superhuman power should take him by the hand and confer on him that gift of immortality which in virtue of his own nature he does not possess. Some of the persons who talk and think thus forget that the New Testament treats man as a being who will live after death, continuously on, whether in happiness or in woe. And others forget that before our Lord came the best and most thoughtful men in the old heathen world were satisfied of this truth, as indeed we may be if we will consider how generally unlike the spirit or soul of man is to any material being.

Let us dwell for awhile on some considerations which go to establish this radical unlikeness between spiritual and material beings.

Now the first consideration is that the spirit or soul of man knows itself to be capable, I do not say of unlimited, but certainly of continuous improvement and development. However vigorous a tree or an animal may be, it soon reaches a point at which it can grow no more. The tree has borne all the leaves, buds, flowers, fruits, that it can bear. Its vital force is exhausted: it can do no more. The animal has attained, we will suppose, to the finest proportions of which its species is capable. It has done its best in the way of strength and beauty, and the limit has been reached: it can do no more. With the soul of man, whether a thinking or a feeling power it is otherwise. Of this we can never certainly say that it has exhausted itself. When a man of science has made a great discovery, or a man of letters has written a great book, or a statesman has carried a series of measures, we cannot say, “He has done his all: he is exhausted.” Undoubtedly in man the spirit is largely dependent on the material body which encases it. The corruptible body, so says the ancient Hebrew wisdom—the corruptible body presseth down the soul. As the body moves towards decay and dissolution it inflicts something of its weakness—something of its growing incapacity—upon its spiritual companion the soul. But the soul on its part constantly resists and protests against this. The soul asserts its own separate and vigorous existence. The

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mind of man knows that each new effort instead of exhausting its powers really enlarges them, and that if only the physical conditions which are necessary to continued exertion in the present state of things are not withdrawn it will go on continuously making larger and nobler acquirements. So, too, with the heart, the conscience, the sense of duty. In this, too, there is no such thing as finality. One noble act suggests another. One great sacrifice for truth or duty prompts another. The virtuous impulse in the soul is not like the life-power of the tree or the animal—a self-exhausting force. On the contrary, it is always, even more consistently than thought, moving forward—conceiving of and aiming at higher duties—understanding more clearly that, advance as it may, it will not reach the limits of its action. “Be not weary of well-doing.” This is the language of the eternal wisdom to the human will, but never has “Be not weary of growing or thriving” been said to the body of man or animal—to tree or to flower, because organised matter in its most beautiful forms differs conspicuously from spirit in this—that it does reach the limits of its activity and then begins to turn back towards non-existence.

And the second consideration is this. The spirit or mind of man is conscious of, and it values, its own existence. This is not the case with any material being—with any material living forms of life, however lofty or beautiful. The most magnificent tree only gives enjoyment to other beings; it never understands that it itself exists. It is conscious of losing nothing when it is cut down. Poets may fondly treat it as the object of their pity or their sympathy, but it has no interest in its own perfections. An animal does, indeed, feel pleasure and pain, but it feels each sensation as each sensation comes to it. It never puts the sensations together. It never takes the measure of its own life and looks at it as if from the outside as a whole. The animal lives wholly in the present: it has no memory. Now and then some object which it has met before rouses in it a sense of association with some past pleasure or pain, but that is all. Practically, the animal has no past, nor does it look forward. The future is a blank to it. It forecasts nothing. It does not expect the pains or the pleasures of its coming existence. It has no anticipations even of death except such as its senses may immediately convey to it. How different is it with the conscious self-measuring spirit of man. Man's spirit lives more in the past, more in the future, than in the present, exactly in the degree in which man makes the most of himself. Man, as a spirit, reaches back into the past, reviews it, lives it over again in memory, turns it to account in the way of experience. Man, as a spirit, reaches forward into future time—gazes wistfully at its uncertainties, maps it out—so far as it can, provides for it—at least, conditionally, disposes of it. Man, as a spirit, rises out of—rises above—the successive sensations which make up to an animal its whole present life. Man understands what it is to exist. He understands his relation to other beings and to nature. He sees something—something at any rate—of the unique grandeur of his being among the existences around him. And thus he desires to exist beyond the present into the future which he anticipates—to exist into a very distant future if he may. The more his spirit makes of itself—the more it makes of its powers and its resources—the more earnestly does it desire prolonged existence. And thus the best heathens had the clearest presentiment of a life beyond the grave. These men of high thoughts and noble resolves could not understand that, because material bodies were perishing around them, there-

fore conscience, reason, will, the common endowments of human kind, must or could be extinguished too. These men longed to exist—ay, after death, that they might continue to make progress in all such good as they had begun in this life in their high thoughts and their excellent resolves; and with these longings they believed that they would thus exist, after all, when this life was over. The longing itself, you see, was a sort of proof that this object was real. How else was the existence of the longing to be satisfactorily explained? If all enterprise in thought and in virtue was to be abruptly broken off by the shock of death, at any rate in this longing and in the power of self-measurement out of which it grew, the spirit of man discovered its radical unlikeness to the lower forms of life around it. It became familiar with the idea of a prolonged existence, under other conditions, beyond the grave.

And a third consideration which pointed towards the natural immortality of man—a consideration of much weight—was this: unless a spiritual being is immortal such a being does count for less in the universe than mere inert matter, for matter has a kind of immortality of its own. At any rate, so far as our observation goes, it does not perish. It only changes its form. We speak commonly of the growth and destruction of living things—of trees and animals; but we must be careful how we use any such word as destruction if we mean more than destruction of form,—or any such word as growth if we imagine any real addition to the sum-total of matter in the universe. Existing matter may be combined into new forms of life, and these forms may be dissolved, to be succeeded by new combinations of the same matter. No matter within the range of our human experience ceases to exist: it only takes new shapes, first in one being then in another. The body of the dead animal nourishes the plant which in turn supplies nourishment for and is absorbed into the system of another animal, and this animal in turn is resolved into its chemical elements by death, and then the cycle begins afresh. It is possible that the prediction of the destruction of the world at the last day will be only a new disposition of the sum-total of matter which now makes up this visible universe. It is possible that forms will change beyond all power of imagination to conceive, but that there will be no real increase or diminution of existing material. Certainly every thoughtful believer in God knows that there was a time when matter did not exist, and that a time may come when the will which summoned it into existence may annihilate it; but, within tracts of time so vast as to strain and weary the mind which attempts to contemplate them, matter has a practical immortality—an immortality which would place the spirit of man at a great relative disadvantage if man's spirit ceased to exist at death. If man's spirit really perishes at death the higher part of his nature is so much worse off than the chemical ingredients of his body, or of the bodies of the animals around him, since these, certainly, do survive in new forms. Observe, my brethren, that man's spirit cannot be resolved like his body into form and material, the former perishing while the latter survives. Man's spirit either exists in its completeness or it ceases to exist. The bodily form of William the Conqueror has long dissolved into dust. The material atoms which made up the body of William the Conqueror during his lifetime exist somewhere now beneath the pavement of the great church at Caen; but if the memory and the conscience and the will of the Conqueror have perished, then his spirit has ceased to be. There is no substratum below or beyond these which could perpetuate existence; there is nothing spiritual to survive

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them, for the soul of man—your soul and mine—knows itself to be an indivisible whole—a something which cannot be broken up into parts and enter into unison with other souls—with other minds. Each of us is himself. Each can become no other. My memory, my affections, my way of thinking and feeling, are all my own : they are not transferable. If they perish they perish altogether. There are no atoms to survive them which can be worked up into another spiritual existence ; and thus the extinction of an animal or a vegetable is only the extinction of that particular combination of matter—not of the matter itself ; but the extinction of a soul, if the thing were possible, would be the total extinction of all that made it to be what it ever was. In the physical world, destruction and death are only changes. In the spiritual world the only possible analogous process would mean annihilation. And therefore it is a reasonable and a very strong presumption that spirit is not, in fact, placed at this enormous disadvantage when compared with matter, and that, if matter survives the dissolution of organic forms much more must spirit survive the dissolution of the material forms with which it has been for a while associated.

These are the kind of considerations by which thoughtful men living without the light of revelation might be led to see the reasonableness, the high probability, of a future life. They are not indeed strict demonstrations which compel belief in immortality. To minds of a certain order they would also, it is probable, seem poor and inconclusive. But they have led many a noble soul before now up to the very gates of the Church of God. Do not let us think scorn of them as mere philosophy. Do not let us forget that God teaches up to a certain point through reason and nature and conscience, just as He teaches beyond it through His blessed Son. This teaching of nature is presupposed by Christianity. Christianity appeals to it. It is no true service to our Master Jesus Christ to make light of this elementary teaching which God gives us in reason and conscience with a view of heightening the effect of the work of Christ to man. At the same time it is most true that outside the Jewish revelation the immortality of man was not treated by any very large number of men as anything like a certainty. Our Lord Jesus Christ assumed it as certain in all that He said with reference to a future life. And it is His resurrection—the tangible fact of His real survival of the collapse and sharpness of death—which has in this, as in so many other ways, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. What has been we know may be. What has been at least forbids the thought that it could not be, and thus the Christian faith has brought immortality to light through the Gospel. Christianity did not create immortality for men. It brought it to light as an ascertained fact of his nature imperfectly apprehended until Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead. Christ our Lord does not make any one human being immortal any more than He invests any one with reason or with conscience or with will. Immortality like these other gifts is part of the original outfit of our nature, but then our Lord has poured a flood of light upon its meaning and its reality. And what a solemn fact is the immortality of man, dimly apprehended by reason—made certain by revelation. What an unutterably solemn fact that every person in this congregation, will live, must live, in some sense or other, for ever. At this moment each one of us has—or rather is made up of—memory, will, and conscience—each of these altogether his own. A hundred years hence no one of us who are here will be still in the body. Ah, we shall have passed one and all to another sphere of being. We shall exist

each one with memory, will and conscience intact, utterly separate each one from any other living being; and ten thousand years hence—or if the imagination can take in such a vast track of time, ten million years hence—it will be still the same: we shall still exist each one with will, memory, conscience intact, separate from all other beings, each in his eternal resting place.

And this brings us to consider what our Lord's words do mean. What is the kind of life which we Christians do, or should, live because Christ our Saviour on His throne in heaven lives it? Clearly, my brethren, something is meant by life in such passages as this which is higher than—which is beyond—mere existence,—not merely beyond animal existence but beyond the existence, the mere existence, of a spiritual being. We English use life in our popular language in this sense of an existence which is not merely dormant, or inert, or unfruitful, but which has a purpose of some sort and which makes the most of itself; and the Greeks had a particular word to describe the true life of man—man's highest spiritual energy—a word to which our Lord either in language or, more probably, by some marked modulation of His voice must have used an equivalent in the Eastern dialect which He actually employed. This is the word employed when our Lord says "I am *the* life," and when St. Paul says, "Christ Who is our life." And thus in the present passage our Lord does not say "Because I exist ye shall exist also," but He does say "Because I *live* ye shall *live* also." This life is existence in its best and its highest aspects—the existence of a being who makes the most of his endowments—who consciously directs them towards their true purpose and object—in whom they are invigorated, raised, transfigured, by the presence of some new power—by the operations of grace. This enrichment and elevation of being is derived—that is the point—from Christ our Lord. He is the author of this new life just as our first parent is the source of our first natural existence. On this account St. Paul calls our Lord the second Adam, implying that he would have a relation towards the human race in some remarkable way resembling that of our first parent, and, in point of fact, Christ is the parent of a race of spiritual men who push human life to its higher—some of them to its highest—capacities of excellence, just as Adam is the parent of a race of natural men who do what they can or may with their natural outfit. "The second Adam"—remember that title of our Lord Jesus Christ. As natural human existence is derived from Adam, so spiritual or supernatural life is given to already existing men, from and by our Lord Jesus Christ. "As we have borne the image of the earthly we must also bear the image of the heavenly." When our Lord was upon the earth He communicated this life to man by coming in contact with men. What is said of Him on one occasion in reference to a particular miracle is true of His whole appearance upon the earth—"Virtue went out of Him." A common way of describing this is to say that He produced an impression deeper and more lasting than has any who has ever worn our human form. Most certainly He did this. He acted, He spoke; and His looks and gestures and bearing were themselves a vivid and most persuasive language; and men observed and listened. They had never seen, they had never heard, anything like it. They felt the contagion of a presence the influence of which they could not measure—a presence from which there radiated a subtle mysterious energy which was gradually taking possession of them, they knew not exactly how, and making them begin to live a new and higher life. What that result was upon four men of very different casts of

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character we may gather from the reports of the life of Christ which are given us by the four holy evangelists. But at last He died, and rose and disappeared from sight into the heavens, and it is of this aftertime that He says "Because I live, ye shall live also."

How does He now communicate His life when He is out of reach of the senses—when the creative stimulus of His visible presence has been withdrawn?

The answer is, first, by His Spirit. What had been partly visible has now to be a wholly invisible process. The Spirit of Christ—that Divine and personal force whereby the mind and nature of our invisible Saviour is poured into the hearts and minds and characters of men—was to be the Lord and giver of this life to the end of time. "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." And, therefore, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His;" and, therefore, "if any man be in Christ," through being baptised into this one Spirit, "He is the new creation: old things have passed away and all things have become new."

And, secondly, the means whereby the Spirit of Christ does especially convey Christ's life are the Christian sacraments. The sacraments are the guaranteed points of contact with our unseen Saviour—acts in which we may certainly meet Him and be invigorated by Him as we toil along the road of our earthly pilgrimage. Ah, if those sacraments were only symbols of a grace withheld,—if they were only memorials of an absent Saviour, they would have no legitimate place whatever in a religion like the Gospel. They would be on a par with the dead ceremonies of the Jewish law. They would belong appropriately to that old religion of mere types and shadows which, since the coming of our Lord, has given way to a religion in which all is real. Certainly in bestowing on us the life of Christ the Divine Spirit is not, as the old phrase has it, "tied to sacraments." The Spirit of God fills the world and turns persons and words and circumstances to account in His various dealings with the soul of man, but sacraments are chartered means of grace. And—such is our Lord's appointment—if we mean to live because Christ lives, we cannot do without them. We could do without a mere symbolical washing in water, but "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." We could do without bread and wine eaten in memory of an absent Christ, but "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you." And if we cannot understand how rites so simple should convey to us the transcendent blessings and powers which come straight from the very heart of the invisible world, is this wonderful when we understand so little—so very little—of the lower forms of life around us,—of those simple yet most mysterious processes of nature which surround us on every side? What is life in the animal? What is life in the tree? Why should food support it in the one case or moisture in the other? Our commonplace and our scientific answers to these questions only reveal to us a world of mystery, the frontiers of which we seem to know by heart—the real nature of which is utterly beyond us. It is this new life which comes from Christ our Lord which makes it a blessing to have the prospect before us of existing on individually for ever. It is these new thoughts and affections and dispositions which He gives us—which are, in fact, His own—by which an endless existence will be raised to the level of an eternal life. What this life is in its highest form we read in the records of the one life, ideal and yet most real which was once lived on earth and which is described in the Gospels. What it may be we

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see in those great saints and servants of His who have lived from age to age since His coming and have shown to the world by their patience and their heroism what His grace can make of our poor, frail, fallen, humanity. What it is too often we know in ourselves. We know how vast is the interval between the way in which we think and express ourselves and act, and the actions and language and thoughts which are set before us in the Gospels. Why is our Christianity too often so poor and feeble and depressed a thing? Why is it so unequal to its great traditions in the past—to the anticipations which in our higher moments even we can cherish for its future? Before our eyes is the same ideal as that which has shone upon all the generations of Christendom. We have the same hopes and fears—the same warnings and encouragements—as any of Christ's servants in days gone by. May it not be that we modern Christians have largely put out of sight the fact that the true life comes from Him, and from Him alone, Whose name we bear? May it not be that we trust to our own energy or common sense or perception for a power and for results which faith and love must receive, if they are to be received at all, from the pierced hands of an invisible Saviour? "Because I live, ye shall live also." We rely wholly on His death for the pardon of our sins, and we do well. But He has more to give us than this. This is only half of His Gospel. If He died for our sins He rose again for our justification. "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life."

Let us be up and doing. Let us look to the sources of our true outfit for the eternal world. Let us make the most of them. Our immortality is certain. But what sort of an immortality is it to be? That is a question before which all else that touches ourselves fades away into utter insignificance. That is a question which can be only well and satisfactorily answered by a soul which hastens to draw water from the wells of salvation—which having itself heard the words uttered as of old over the sinner, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven"—still kneels on in persevering love at the feet of the Divine Master to receive from Him the supplies and the strength which are assuredly needful for the life eternal, and to hear more and more clearly, as the closing scene draws nigh, the Divine promise "Because I live, thou shalt live also."

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVINCING THE WORLD.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 29TH, 1877.

"And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."—JOHN xvi. 8.

IN to-day's Gospel our Lord is speaking, just before His own death, of the work of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, Who was to descend upon the Apostles when He Himself had ascended into Heaven. "If I depart," says our Lord, "I will send Him unto you ; and when He is come He will reprove (or convince) the world." And this passage is chosen for to-day's Gospel, because Whitsuntide is now drawing on, and it is time to begin to think what blessings we owe to the coming of the Holy Spirit, that we may the better enter, heart and soul, into the joy of the Whitsun festival. Observe here that the Holy Spirit is to do a certain work on or for the world. And by "the world," in passages like this, is meant, of course, not the world of nature—not even the entire human race, but mankind so far as mankind is generally opposed to the mind of God. The word "world," in this sense, is not merely a description ; it is an implied condemnation. It means human life, so far as it is in opposition to the life of Jesus Christ and His true disciples. See, how this opposition runs through our Lord's sayings about the world. "Ye," He says to His disciples, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Or, again, in His prayer to the Father—"I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be Thine." Again, to the disciples—"Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Again, speaking of the crucifixion, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." Again, with reference to the

Comforter—"The Spirit of truth Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him, but ye, My disciples, know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Observe how much our Lord says to the disciples about the blessings which they would receive from the coming of the Comforter. With them the Comforter, Whom the world cannot receive, is to abide for ever. Jesus Himself will send the Comforter to them from the Father. The Comforter will teach them all things. The Comforter will bring all the past sayings of Christ to their remembrance. He never will testify to the world of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will take of the words and works of Christ, and show the true meaning of them to them. He will guide them into all the truth. He will show them the things to come. Thus the disciples were clearly within the circuit of His direct and effective action. And yet it appears that He had something to do for those outside. He was not going to leave the world utterly to itself because it could not receive Him,—because it neither saw nor knew Him. He would not, indeed, shed on it His higher gifts of prophecy, illumination, guidance into all the truth. He would not be in the world an abiding presence. He would hover around it, teaching it just what it could bear, reproofing it by the new and awakened convictions which He would create in it—reproofing it by convincing it that sin, righteousness, and judgment, which it had vaguely talked about for ages, were solemn realities. "He shall convince"—not without reproof—that it is the sense of the word—"He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

Now, see here, first of all, the work of the Holy Spirit upon the Jewish world of the age of the apostles. It is natural to ask to what particular sin—to what righteousness—to what judgment—was our Lord immediately referring? This question is answered by His own words which follow closely afterwards. "Of sin, because (or in that) they believe not on Me; of righteousness in that I go to the Father and ye see Me no more; of judgment, in that the prince of this world is judged." The Jewish world of that generation had to be convinced of one particular sin—the sin of not believing in our Lord Jesus Christ: "of sin, in that they believe not on Me." Unbelief then—at any rate, such unbelief as that of the Jews who heard and saw our Lord—is sin according to His own estimate. It is not merely a variety of mental persuasion differing only from faith in that it rejects that which faith accepts. It is not merely an act of the mind: it is an act of the will, and an act of an intrinsically perverse character. It is not a misfortune like a fever caught in an infected house, or an accident incurred when travelling by the railway. We cannot help these things. They come upon us from without, and we are their victims. But a man can help believing what he does believe—can help disbelieving what he does not believe, at any rate, within large limits. That is, he is originally responsible for being in the state of mind which, in the event, rejects or accepts the truths of faith. Faith, according to our Lord's teaching, is a test of a man's moral character. Faith, like unbelief, is as much, or rather more, a moral than a mental act. We believe—partly, at any rate—that which our moral nature makes us wish to believe. We disbelieve—partly, at any rate—that which, as we foresee, will involve unwelcome results for us, being morally such as we are. The Jews had overwhelming evidence before them to show that Jesus Christ was the Messiah promised in their own prophets; but they did not wish to believe in a Teacher Who had made them dissatisfied with them-

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selves, and was likely to make them still more so ; and accordingly they did not believe in Him. Their wills were able—more than able—to overmaster their understandings, and so our Lord's teaching and works went for nothing with them, or rather, only enhanced their guilt. "If," He said, "I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father."

Here, then, we see the destined work of the Holy Ghost in the Jewish world of that generation. He did not add to the proof which was there to warrant faith in the claim of Christ. He moved as a softening influence upon the hard wills and hearts of the Jewish people. He suggested to them a doubt whether they really had been simply wishing to get at the truth—whether they had dealt quite fairly with the appeal to their own history and scriptures which had just been made to them. This influence of the Spirit was very far indeed from being irresistible. The majority of the people still treated it as they had treated the voice and the presence of Christ : they set it aside. But with some it was otherwise—with ^{the} Apollos, with Gamaliel, with Aquila and Priscilla, with the band of converts whom St. Paul calls the "remnant according to the election of grace." Nay, on the day of Pentecost itself, when the Holy Spirit had just descended on the Apostles, St. Peter, first among them in place, but hitherto, at any rate, weakest and last in purpose, so convinced those of his countrymen, who listened to him, of the greatness of their sins against the love of God manifested in the Divine Redeemer, that "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The words which they heard with their outward ears were seconded by the whispers of the inward teacher, and men whose hands were yet red with the blood of the crucifixion melted into tears of penitence and faith.

And the Jewish world of that generation had to be convinced of righteousness, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more." The Jews knew what righteousness was, but they had persistently asserted that our Lord was not righteous. On the contrary, they said that He was a sinner, and that God would not hear His prayers. They explained His miracles by saying that He was in league with Beelzebub. They denounced as blasphemy His claim to be what He really was ; and, when He was put to a shameful death, they regarded this as a proof vouchsafed from heaven that they had been right all along. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This was the title which they read on His cross as confirming their own estimate of Him.

It is very difficult to shake a bitter prejudice like this, especially when it has assumed anything like national proportions. It is proof against argument, proof against entreaty, proof against all the ordinary methods of persuasion, proof against any purely human influence, when it has been strengthened and embittered by long controversy. True, Jesus Christ had risen from His grave in vindication of His claims and of His character ; but our every-day experience may teach us that a fact, however clearly attested, has no sort of influence on persons who have made up their minds not to accept a consequence which necessarily follows from it. The Jews had closed their eyes to the consequence

of Christ's life, and they had no difficulty in inventing explanations to dispose of an unwelcome event like His resurrection, followed by His ascension into heaven.

"I go to the Father," He said, "and ye see Me no more." This was nevertheless the fact upon which the Spirit, whispering to the hearts of thousands of Jews, would persistently dwell. That mysterious, triumphant departure of Jesus Christ, the real character of which could be falsified by no accumulation of vulgar reports—what did it mean? Did it not recall all that had preceded it—the words such as never man spake—the acts, each of them the best possible at the moment, each of them without a flaw—the one life on earth, in which the will of the Father had been perfectly mirrored? Was it not, after all, in harmony with such a life as this? The past rose up before them in memory. The Holy Spirit breathed upon the memory of the past, set it in its true light—discovered its drift, its meaning. They still saw what they had seen before, but they saw it with new eyes. And thus Christ was justified or recognised as righteous in the Spirit, and believed on in the world after He had been received up into glory. Here, again, there was no compulsion. The Spirit would not save the Jewish world from its worst prejudices against its will. Men might, if they would—numbers did—go on asserting, with passionate vehemence intended to silence the insurgent questions within them, their persuasion of the unrighteousness of Jesus; but the Holy Spirit had His triumphs nevertheless. He was at work in the hearts of that very assembly which listened to Stephen—which condemned him to death for proclaiming the Just One, of Whom they had been now the betrayers and murderers. It was this rising but unwelcome conviction of the real righteousness of the Crucified, brought home to them by the silent Divine Teacher Who seconded the words which fell on their ears, that cut the judges of Stephen to the heart. It was this which sowed the seed that grew up in the soul of Saul of Tarsus, and that changed him from being, in his own words, a blasphemer and a persecutor, into a doctor of the nations in faith and verity. And, for St. Paul, his Master's lofty righteousness was not merely or chiefly a glory of his Master's character; it was a treasure which he, too, reaching out for it the hand of faith, might himself claim. Taught by the Spirit he learned to despise his own righteousness, which was of the law—that poor measure of obedience which was all that he could compass without the grace of Christ—and to prize this higher and perfect righteousness of his Lord as a robe which should cover his own deficiencies—as a gift which should renew his being from within. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And once more. The Jewish world of that day had to be convinced of the reality of judgment. The Jews admitted it in words, just as they were very familiar with the language of their scriptures about sin, about righteousness; but they did not believe that they would be judged—that God was judging them. The judgments on which they loved to dwell were God's great judgments on the enemies of Israel in bygone centuries—on Pharaoh, on Agag, on Nebuchadnezzar. Judgment was with them a matter of historical interest: perhaps it was a matter of national pride. They did not think of it as an impending or a present thing for which it behoved them to be prepared. Certainly there were signs in the heaven above and in the earth beneath—signs in the world of thought and in the world of politics—which might have been

read even by unobservant eyes as protending coming change and disaster. But to these warnings the eyes at the Jewish world were closed. As we know from the proceedings at our Lord's trial, they resented any expression, although misunderstood, which seemed to them to imply that their temple was not to last for ever. They had no doubt at all that what was really before them was a time, not of judgment, but of splendid and abundant triumph.

Now, the Holy Spirit was to convince the Jewish world, or those members of it who admitted of conviction, of the reality of future judgment, in that the prince of this world was judged. The unseen personal spirit of evil, who had the power of death, was judged by God when death was conquered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Satan had done his utmost at the birth of Christ, at the temptation of Christ, at each step in our Lord's ministry, at the closing scenes of the passion, to frustrate the work of the Divine Redeemer among men. Satan, from the first, struggled to rid himself of an enemy who threatened the independence and integrity of his own kingdom of unrighteousness. And therefore he entered into the heart of the traitor Judas; and therefore he stirred up the chief priests and Pharisees against our Lord; and therefore he roused the passions of the people to cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" "This is your hour," said our Lord, "and the power of darkness." But at the resurrection, Satan, like lightning, fell from the heaven of empire. Jesus Christ went upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon He trod under His feet. All the social combinations, all the pedantic speculations, all the passionate resolves, which had for the moment triumphed on Calvary, faded away, and were as though they had not been. As our Lord said, in an earlier review of the issue of the conflict, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are at peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armoury wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils." The prince of this world was judged. We Christians see this clearly enough now in the light of the past, but to see it then—to see it through the thick brushwood of ancient prejudice, which shut out the sunlight from the mind of a Jew—was no easy matter,—was beyond the reach of ordinary human keen-sightedness. It was the unseen Teacher—the Divine and eternal Spirit, acting with and through the teaching of the Apostles—who put the resurrection before the minds of men in its true light, as the decisive turning-point in the great struggle between good and evil—as the judgment of the prince of this world. In this one victory there lay the strength and the promise of victories to come—of what St. Paul calls "the pulling down of strongholds"—strongholds of prejudice, strongholds of error, strongholds of self-interest. Here was the earnest of the coming collapse of the idolatry of the pagan empire to be achieved only after three centuries of martyrdom.

But here also was the warning of a nearer judgment of which the Jewish world particularly must be convinced. In less than half a century the legions of Titus would encamp around the sacred city, and the blood which had been shed on Calvary would be remembered, all too late, amid the ruin and the despair of Jerusalem.

But our Lord's words about sin and righteousness and judgment have a wider scope than this. They suggest to us the three moral ingredients of a healthy public opinion in a Christian country. Every society, every nation, has its public opinion, its common stock of hopes, fears, likings, enthusiasms

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repugnances, tastes, points of view—a common stock to which we all of us contribute something, and by which in turn we all are influenced. The cities of the old world, each of them, had a public opinion of its own—Rome and Athens and Jerusalem. And now, too, wherever men meet, and exchange their thoughts, and know themselves to be bound to each other by ties of race, or of common interest, or of historic association, there grows up inevitably a common fund of thoughts and phrases which may be barbarous—which may be enlightened—but which is always influential. Like the smoke and vapour which hang visibly in the air over every large centre of human life, to which every hearth contributes something, and by which every window is more or less shaded, so in the world of public thought there is a like common product of all the minds which think and feel at all, which in turn influences all that contribute to it, more or less. And what I am now insisting upon is that this inevitable product and accompaniment of human society—public opinion—if it is Christian, must contain a recognition of the three solemn facts of sin, righteousness, judgment.

Of sin, when left to itself, the world at large has no adequate idea—often no idea whatever. The world knows and speaks only of faults, offences, failures, mistakes, misconduct—softer words deliberately chosen. It does not speak of sin. It avoids the word. It recognises the existence of moral evil. It cannot help doing that, because moral evil in its exaggeration threatens to break up society, to destroy law, to make life unendurable; but the world at large has an eye to its effects, not to the nature of the cause which produces them.

Now, sin is only moral evil as in the light of the law and love of God. Generally speaking, men of the world place moral evil, such as they recognise, in some feebler light—in the light of human law—in the light of personal obligations—in the light of the sense of self-respect—in the light of the judgment of the respectable—in the light of their own common sense.

And in the same way the world has no true idea of righteousness, though it uses—though it respects—the word. It means, by righteousness, conformity to human right, respect for human laws, external propriety, respectability. It has no idea of a righteousness which is an affair of motives—which is, when out of sight, much more than it is when it meets the eye—which cares, at bottom, only for the approval of the Father Who seeth in secret,—which will, sometimes—which must, sometimes—defy public opinion—defy current ideas of respectability—defy even human law in defence of some higher right disclosed to conscience.

Nor has the world any true idea of judgment. Judgment is for most men a remote contingency—too remote to be made the subject of practical calculations. It is a dim and far-off conception, recognised as necessary for the ideal discipline of the world, but not taken into account as embodied in a coming event with which, one by one, we have to reckon.

Now, the Holy Spirit, acting through the teaching of Scripture—the teaching of the Christian Church—the social influence of men who are under His guidance—is continually enriching and raising this poor and degraded public opinion—at least, in countries where the Church of Christ is found—by imparting a new and truer estimate of sin and righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit, penetrating into the dark places of national opinion, is like a light borne into a cavern, revealing dangers beneath the feet, revealing beauties at the sides and over the head of the explorer, enabling the explorer to discern what is before him. From

age to age the Holy Spirit, employing the ascendancy of men of high character and authority as His instruments—men who have the moral, as distinct from the merely material, interests of their fellow-creatures at heart—is deepening and sharpening the public sense of sin. Thus the national conscience of one generation is tolerant of evil which the next will disallow. And, although there is a reverse side to this, and, in some cases, as in the instance of our own new law of divorce, a nation takes a distinctly retrograde step, yet, upon the whole, the national conscience becomes more sensitive to the perpetration of national wrong: it is convinced of sin. In the same way the Holy Ghost lights up in the conscience of a country the idea of righteousness—teaches men to distinguish real greatness from fictitious greatness—teaches them to distinguish greatness of character from mere greatness of position—to rate simplicity and disinterestedness and honesty of purpose and quick sympathy with wrong, more highly than mere brilliancy or success, combined with good-natured indifference to principle. Above all, He teaches nations to believe that God has not left them to themselves,—that He does take account of their corporate acts,—that His hand stretched out for judgment is to be seen in events which hitherto looked to them like the natural products of natural causes. In a word, the work of the Spirit upon opinion is to suggest a new and a higher point of view,—to make men look with new eyes at contemporary events,—to enhance the unseen and the moral at the cost, if it need be, of the visible, of the material,—to suggest the transcendent importance of eternal interests when balanced against those which only belong to time.

There is much else of a very different kind in the public opinion of any Christian country—conspicuously, we must confess it, of this country. But the contribution to it which is made by the Holy Spirit—made through the influence of the Christian Church among us, and of good Christians—is the salt, depend upon it, which saves the nation from perishing of sheer corruption.

And here we see the great responsibility of all, whether in lowly stations or in high, who have any means of influencing for good the public opinion of their countrymen. The words we utter, the words we write, each and all of us, do contribute a something towards the total result. Now, are we, let us ask ourselves, the organs of the Spirit, raising the moral standard of the time, doing our little to convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, or are we merely reflecting and representing the more selfish and degrading elements of contemporary thought? Are we echoing its appeals to bad passions, to unworthy prejudices, its indifference to questions of right and duty, when balanced against material interests, real or imaginary? At all times in a nation's history this is a serious question, but especially at a time like the present, when the most thoughtless mind must feel that we are living in presence of great events, and taking our first steps towards an unknown but momentous future. Let us, while thankfully acknowledging God's great gifts to England of a unique position of influence and power in the world,—oh, let us not forget that, whether for men or for nations, no material interests, no sway of empire, no historical prestige, even if these could be threatened, are worth deliberate complicity with barbarous tyranny and wrong; that the highest interests of a country are in its hatred of evil, its love of righteousness, its faith in the judgments of God; that, in a word, "righteousness," as distinct from a "spirited policy"—"righteousness exalteth a nation," while "sin is a reproof to any people."

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And in this exterior action of the Spirit upon the public opinion and the conscience of a nation, we see the source of that elevation of character which is sometimes to be found—we must admit it—in men who own no allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ. When men of this kind are named, it is not uncommon to hear the remark that, after all, it cannot matter much whether a country has or has not a faith, because here is such and such a citizen who, morally speaking, does so very well without one—who is so generous, so self-sacrificing, so noble, so unselfish. But the question is, whence did the man get these things? They come to him from the indirect influences of that very faith which he adjures—from detached fragments of the truth deposited, like some jewel in a rude conglomerate deposit, in the crude mass of public opinion, and he has extracted them. That is all. They are the work of his unseen Teacher of the reality of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. But for Christianity, little as he thinks it, this man would never have been what he is, though he repudiates his obligations.

And lastly, in these three words—sin, righteousness, judgment—we have before us the three governing ideas—the three moments, so to call them—of the Christian life. The Spirit Who convinces the world of sin and righteousness and judgment carries this three-fold conviction with imperious force right into the heart of every true Christian.

First in order, there comes the conviction of sin—of the man's own sins, seen in their number, seen without disguise, seen in their real magnitude. A Christian knows what sin is. He may fall into it again and again, but he does not deceive himself either as to its nature or as to its consequences. The visible Teacher is there, close at hand, in his very heart, to insist upon the stern truth. And so the Christian is ever on the look-out for sin, ever struggling with its approaches. His falls do not disguise from him for a moment its radical opposition to God and to goodness.

And next, there is the conviction of righteousness. A Christian knows what righteousness is. He has been taught its true standard by the inward Teacher. He knows a saint of Christ when he sees one, though as yet he may be far, very far, from being a saint himself. He knows that, in the impassioned yet accurate language of Scripture, any righteousness which could be furnished out of his own moral resources is regarded as a moral clothing in the sight of the Most Holy only as filthy rags. And therefore he looks up to the Lord our righteousness, to that sinless and Divine Saviour Whose righteousness becomes his own when it is claimed by faith, when it is conveyed through the chartered means of grace granted to the Church of God.

Above all, the Christian is convinced of judgment. He knows that God is judging him day by day, and that, at the last great day, God will judge him finally, and will award him his place in eternity. The thought of this is constantly before him. It colours, it shapes, his whole idea of the meaning of life and of death. To be thus swayed by fear of sin, by love of a real righteousness, by expectation of the judgment—this is to be led by the Spirit. This is to have passed under the influence of those great creative truths and ideas with which the Spirit was sent down from heaven, that He might purify and fertilise the lives and hearts of men.

Brethren, let us pray Him to perfect His blessed work in us one by one, that, while time lasts and eternity is still future, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" may make us, each one "free from the law of sin and death."

THE LAW A SCHOOLMASTER.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 5TH, 1877.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."—GAL. iii. 24.

THIS is one of those sentences often to be met with in St. Paul, into which he compresses an entire world of thought and feeling—sentences in which the message that he has to announce reaches its tersest and most vigorous expression. St. Paul is explaining to the Galatian Christians, some of whom were inclined to go back to Jewish usages, the true place and office of the old Jewish law in the religious history of man. And by "the law" he means, not simply the ten commandments or even the whole body of precepts contained in the Books of Moses, but the sacred literature and ordinances as received in their entirety by the Jewish people in his own day. Of the law taken in this broad and comprehensive sense he asserts that it was a schoolmaster to bring Jews by birth, like himself, to faith in and love for our Lord Jesus Christ. The original word translated "schoolmaster" in this passage does not mean the master of a school. It was the name of a slave who had charge of his owner's children, and who, among other duties, led them by the hand to the porch, or the house, where the teacher who was really to instruct them gave his lessons. This slave was not merely a servant who kept the children neat and out of the way of danger; he was a sort of private tutor as well, who prepared them for the instructions which they were to receive from the philosopher or professor whose class they attended. These higher lessons were quite beyond the power of the tutor himself to give, but he could do something in the way of removing difficulties which prevented young people from understanding what they were taught; and, above all, he could take care that those entrusted to his charge should be punctually in their place when the philosopher or professor began his work.

Now, by this reference to the family arrangements of the ancient world St. Paul is able to place before his readers, very clearly, the real relation of the Jewish law to the Gospel and faith of Christ. St. Paul takes up a middle position on the subject, between those who so exaggerated the importance of the Jewish law as to consider it a final revelation from God to man, and those, on the other hand, who went so far as to speak of it as, religiously, useless. No, the law was not final, for Jesus Christ had come; and His Gospel, although based upon it, had superseded it. No, the law was not useless, for it was a tutor charged with the high and honourable duty of bringing the Jewish people down to the School of Christ. In the Apostle's eyes there had been, now for some four-and-twenty years, one great school open to all the races of mankind, and in which alone instruction was to be had respecting the subjects which are best worth every man's attentive study; and that school was the Church of Jesus Christ. In St. Paul's eyes there was one great Teacher—only One—Who had absolute claims upon the intellectual and moral allegiance of man—one Prince of philosophers and poets and prophets, at Whose voice all others should hold their peace, since, while they only could guess at truth, or could teach it in fragments, He possessed and proclaimed it in its entirety without error and without imperfection, for in Him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And since His incarnation He had sat as the Light and Instructor of the nations, first, visibly, during the years of His earthly ministry, and then, invisibly, as speaking through His Apostles and His Church. He was the true Master of souls, through Whom the eternal God would teach mankind its highest lessons, and the value of all other teachers simply varied with their disposition or their power to lead mankind to become His pupils. Pagan religion and pagan philosophy did this service occasionally and incidentally for men of pure and noble character, but the law and religion of Israel was, from first to last, a preparation for Him. It was a "shadow of good things to come." It was a tutor, whose business and privilege it was to point the way to the dwelling of the great Master.

Now how did the Jewish religion or law answer to St. Paul's description? What were the means by which it did lead honest hearts and minds away from allegiance to itself, and end by handing them over to the Church or School of Christ?

There were three main ways, among others, by which this was effected.

The religion of Israel brought men to Christ, first of all, by the light—I might say by the constraining force—of prophecy. If any people were ever encouraged by their sacred literature to live in and for the future, that people was Israel. From Genesis to Malachi there is a long chain of predictions—predictions at first vague and indeterminate, and then, as the centuries passed, becoming narrower, clearer, more and more definite, until at last they might seem to close around their object and to describe Him by anticipation, but completely. First a human deliverance of some kind, then a personal Saviour, is announced. He is to come of the descendants of Abraham, then of the race of Israel, then of the tribe of Judah, then of the family of David. He is to be a Monarch and yet a Sufferer. He is to be born supernaturally, and yet He is to die. He is to be buried, and yet He is to conquer the allegiance of the world. This one prediction, indeed, must have struck, as it did strike, thoughtful Jews as something peculiarly astonishing—that from their own little country there would arise a Teacher Whose life would be marked by humiliation and by apparent failure, while in the end He would bring the proud heathen peoples around to the knowledge of the true God. For many a year such language

must have seemed too good, as we say, to be true—too evidently the imagining of pious prophets and teachers to have any destined place in the world of hard facts; and yet there it was in the sacred books of Israel. There it was, confronting one generation after another. There it was, sometimes neglected, sometimes studied intently, then again cast aside—the object of awful wonder, of wild misunderstanding, of audacious speculation. There it was, at once a rebuke and an encouragement—a difficulty and yet a witness and a guarantee—a lamp to the feet and a light to the paths, and yet a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as fathers, and sons, and grandsons, one after another, read it and passed away. And, at last, He to Whom it pointed came Himself among men, and then these words had done their work, just as light along the line of the horizon disappears when we see the orb of the rising sun. He did die in humiliation and in shame, and then He passed on to be the spiritual Conqueror of the world. He was exactly what prophecy had foretold. He Himself appealed to prophecy as warranting His claims. He claimed to be exactly what it had sketched beforehand. “Search the Scriptures,” He said to the Jews of His day, “for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.” And so to His perplexed disciples after the resurrection—“O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” “And then beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” And thus when St. Peter is arguing with Christians who believe in an ascended Saviour, he says, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables.” He refers, first of all to what he himself had seen at the transfiguration, and then he adds, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.” And the first book of the New Testament—St. Matthew’s Gospel—was written mainly with the object of showing in detail to the Christians of Judea that Jesus of Nazareth fully corresponded to the Christ of prophecy. Again and again we meet with the phrase “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying,” as though it was not more true that prophecy had been given to lead men to Christ than that Christ had come to justify the truth of prophecy. Read that first Gospel through, my brethren, and observe how in it the scattered sayings of the Jewish prophets are brought to a focus and seem to centre in and to be satisfied by one single life. See how prophecy and the law takes Israel by the hand and leads him down to the Redeemer as the certificate of its truth—as the object of its existence.

And the Jewish religion, secondly, brought men to Christ by that ceremonial law which formed so important a part of it. It invested with ceremony the worship of God—the great occasions of state—the private events of human life. Ceremony is a kind of language: it is a means of conveying ideas from mind to mind. It is the language not of speech but of action. It is less explicit than the words we use: it is often more suggestive. Every day of our lives, as we stand face to face with each other, a thousand gestures render words unnecessary and convey more meaning than words could convey. Every day of our lives, during our intercourse with each other, we read this language of action as we listen to that other language of the tongue. We try and interpret the words that we hear by what we observe of the expressive gestures which accompany them. Ceremony, as an instrument for expressing ideas, strikes

its roots far into the original instincts of our common nature ; and when God embodied it largely in the religion which He gave to Israel He had much deeper purposes in view than lay on the surface of that which He prescribed. Never let us forget, as we read such books as Leviticus, that the ancient ritual of Israel was not of human origin—that it was enjoined from heaven. Doubtless, it was intended to give shape, expression, fixity, to the solemn faith in and worship of God, which was revealed to Israel. Doubtless, too, it was meant to establish a barrier, visible to sense, between the people of revelation and the heathen races around. But these results might, conceivably, have been secured by other rites than those which are commanded in the Jewish law ; and the ritual of Leviticus has a meaning and a value over and above this. It was throughout a sort of acted prophecy. It looked forward—every detail of it—to a coming time—to a higher worship—to a religion of which it was but the shadow thrown forward, provisionally, across the ages, until the complete reality which it heralded, should, at length, appear. “What is the meaning”—pious Jews must have again and again exclaimed—“what is the meaning of all these carefully elaborated rites—of these solemn days, these costly dresses, these blood-stained sacrifices? Why these and no others? Why these details, many of them, apparently, so trivial, yet enforced by sanctions so imposing and so awful?” The answer was that all this ceremonial law has an object beyond itself. It is the shadow of good things to come: it is not the very image of the things. It is a Teacher Who will lead His pupils to the feet of One to Whose person and work He thus perpetually refers in the language—the expressive language—of symbol. All that could be gathered from the ceremonial law before Christ’s coming was that it meant a something beyond itself. What it meant could only be known afterwards, and in the light of the Gospel. Jews could not have guessed exactly that the Sabbath pointed to the eternal rest of heaven, and circumcision to the purification of man’s nature by a new birth, and the Paschal Lamb to the Divine Victim offered for human sin on Mount Calvary, and the table of shewbread to the blessed sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood. We Christians see all this. We see much more, plainly enough, but we could hardly have divined it if we had lived in the ages before the incarnation. But when Christ came this key to the meaning of the Jewish ceremonial was seen to fit. It pointed to Him and to His redemptive work from first to last. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to show this—to show that the ceremonial law of the Jews was far from being a final and complete rule of life and worship—did but prefigure blessings that were to follow it,—that it was a tutor to lead men to the School of Christ.

And, thirdly, the Jewish law or religion brought men to Christ by creating a sense of moral need which He alone could satisfy ; for it was not merely a collection of prophecies or a code of ceremonial ; it was also, and chiefly, a body of moral precepts respecting conduct. The duty of the sacred people, the duty of its kings and its priests, the duty of each individual Israelite towards God and towards his fellow-man—these it ruled in detail. The ten commandments are, at this moment, the moral rule of Christendom, and, as might be shown if time sufficed, they contain, in a compendious form, an exhaustive statement of human duty towards the Author of our being, and towards our fellow-creatures. It was this law of which the pious Israelite embroidered on his robe. It was this law of which the king of Israel sang that it was an undefiled law converting the soul,—that, as the testimony of the Lord, it was sure, giving wisdom to the simple,—that, as the statutes of the Lord, it was

right and rejoiced the heart,—that, as the commandment of the Lord, it was pure, giving light unto the eyes, and that, as a whole, more to be desired was it than gold, “yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”

Such was the moral law given to Israel, and yet, practically, it seemed to be a failure. It was not kept. Even the best Israelites did not keep it, while the greater number neglected it altogether. St. Paul quotes from the Jewish Scriptures severe sentences which, taken broadly, describe what was the condition of Israel in his own day. “It is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” And, as he proceeds, the severity of the description grows space. “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” And then the Apostle anticipates a Jewish objection—that this language for the most part describes, in the original, the moral condition of heathens, not of Jews; and he answers it by appealing to a principle insisted on by the Jewish doctors themselves—that the law spoke, in the first instance, not to all the world but only to the chosen people. “We know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.” Israel was, in fact—he and they knew it—Israel was, in fact, as bad as its sacred books described. It made its boast in the law, but in breaking the law it dishonoured its God.

How was this to be explained? How was it consistent, men have asked, with the Creator’s wisdom that He should have given to His people a law which He must have foreseen would not be observed? St. Paul answers this by saying that the law was given to teach man an ideal or a rule of righteousness, and thereby it discovered to him his own sinfulness and weakness. “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.” It brought them to light: it carried the lamp of moral truth into the dark places of the human conscience. It taught sinful man to see himself, at least in part, as God sees him. Nay, it did more. The presence of this Divine rule of right stimulated the dormant sinfulness of human nature to new activity. “Without the law sin was dead, but when the commandment came sin revived.” “But is not this,” it might have been asked—“Is not this a heavy indictment against the Divine Author of the law, that it might actually promote the energy of sin?” “No,” the Apostle replies: “the real promoter of sin is not the law, but the debased dispositions of man.” Good food is poison to a diseased body. The sunshine only shrivels the sickly plant, but the food and the sunshine are God’s blessing, notwithstanding, to healthy natures. And the moral law is not in itself less holy, and just, and good because sinful man is irritated by it into new acts of disobedience. “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet; but sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”

The moral law—God’s essential indestructible moral nature in its relation to human life, thrown, for practical purposes, into the form of commandments—the moral law is essentially, necessarily beyond criticism;

but when given to sinful man it does, but without grace, discover a want which it cannot satisfy. Nay, such was man's condition in that older dispensation that it was the occasion of aggravating the evil which it could not heal, and thus it was that the moral law like the Jewish ritual—like Jewish prophecy, but with more effective power than either, led man down to the School of the Redeemer. It disclosed wants, heartaches, miseries, which He alone could heal and satisfy. It enhanced the aching sense of unpardoned sin before a holy God. "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."

And the law, further, convinced man of his moral weakness as well as of his guilt—of his inability without the strengthening grace of Christ ever to obey it. But then "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." To Christ the law leads down, not merely as a Pardoner of guilt, but as a Giver—as a Source—of moral force which will do what man of his own strength cannot possibly do. This new life of obedience prompted from within by a new moral power, and not imposed from without upon moral decrepitude, St. Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It is the gift of our Divine and gracious Master—His greatest and most signal gift to those who simply accept Him.

How it is claimed must be discussed, please God, hereafter. For the present, let us observe what we may learn from the Jewish law that is thus described as leading us as a tutor to Jesus Christ.

In these words we see a test of the value of all religious privileges or gifts. Do they or do they not lead souls to Christ? That is the question. It is the supreme question for a Christian. In St. Paul's eyes it was the high distinction of the Jewish law that it could thus lead the Jewish people to faith in—to love for—the Divine Redeemer; and this surely is the criterion which we Christians should apply to the several agencies, persons, privileges, pursuits, which bear upon or which belong to religion. Are they likely to make us give more of our thought, and heart, and will to our Saviour; or will they interest us mainly in themselves, and so keep us at a distance from Him? Doubtless in this matter a great deal depends upon a man himself. The majority of the people of Israel were not led to Christ in St. Paul's day, but the fault did not lie with the Jewish law; and if in the present day we hear, as we do sometimes hear, people saying that Church privileges do not lead them to Christ, the explanation, I apprehend, is not to be found in the services of the Church, which are full of Christ from first to last, but in something wrong in these persons themselves. Unless there be in the soul that sacred yearning for better things which will make the most of the opportunities offered to it, no external privileges will of itself lead to the knowledge and to the love of the Redeemer. In all generations some souls appear to live on crumbs, while others perish amid profusion. This man has no Divine worship at hand, no communions, no religious friendships, no instruction; yet he gathers up the fragments which remain in

memory of a privileged boyhood ; and for him the wilderness blossoms as the rose. And that man lives surrounded by all the means of grace, flooded by the light which streams from heaven, and yet he might as well be a heathen. This man finds in the Divine Scripture only arguments to justify his unbelief : that man can see in a mere human philosophy the reasons for all the rudiments of faith. But, bearing this in mind, it still remains true that the effect of a practice, or a friendship, or a line of thought, or a taste, is generally speaking to be tested by the simple practical question whether it does or does not bring the soul nearer to our Lord—whether, like the Jewish law, it is a tutor who keeps the great Master's claim upon His pupil steadily and exclusively in view, or whether it is something else.

Observe, too, what may be the religious use of all law—all rule—to the human soul. It should teach man to know from experience something of his weakness, and so should lead him to throw himself upon a higher power for pardon and for strength. The moral law written, indistinctly, on the hearts of the heathen did this great service for the Gentile world. It made the thoughtful heathen look upwards for traces of the invisible Law Giver. It rendered him dissatisfied with his own efforts to achieve that which he knew to be certainly right. It led him to yearn, however vaguely, for pardon and for strength, to be received at the hands of an unseen friend. The rules which we Christians make for our daily lives may help us in the same sort of way. No prudent Christian will live without some rule of life—a rule about prayer, about self-examination, about communions, about personal expenditure, about intercourse with others, about the employment of time, about the study of scripture, about the management of the tempter, and the thoughts, and the feelings, and the resolves of the will. And such a rule is meant, no doubt, to be kept ; and in the Church of Jesus Christ, with the aid of His supernatural grace, it can be kept. Every Christian may say with St. Paul, “ I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.” But, practically, for the great majority of us, such a rule acts just as the old Jewish law did for the Jews. It is a tutor to bring us afresh, again and again, with a new sense of guilt, and of dependence, and of weakness, to the feet of our gracious Master. That rule was made, perhaps—it was accepted—in some moment of penitence of fervour, and that moment has passed. Since then we have gone through a time of darkness—of depressed moral effort—of enfeebled resolutions—of shattered hopes, if through nothing worse. And so, with our broken rule of life in our hands, we turn to Him in Whose strength we had hoped to keep it. “ Lord,” we cry, “ lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

‘ Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling ;
Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone.’ ”

Our rule of life itself, just like the Jewish moral law of old, has done us this good service : it has brought us, as a private tutor, down to the school and to the cross of Christ.

And, lastly, in these words we see, or we ought to see, the exceeding preciousness of Christ's Gospel—the matchless value of that faith which lives in the heart of the Church of God. Men sometimes ask the question, whether the Gospel, too, is not to be, in turn, a tutor-religion, whose

business it is to lead to a something beyond—to some broad, and grand, and transcendental religion of the future which will control the hearts and the thoughts of the coming generations. The answer is—it must be—from every believing Christian—"No! A thousand times no!" On the one hand, the Gospel does or may satisfy all the deepest wants of the human soul—the need of freedom, of peace, of a sense of re-established relations with God, of a good hope for the everlasting future. I say the Gospel is so far from pointing to a coming religion which will supersede it that it everywhere proclaims its own finality. Its motto is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Those minds who look beyond it, or would stray beyond it, will, assuredly, find themselves in a blank outer darkness in which even that which the Jewish law could do for them will be left undone. Those who thankfully endeavour, day-by-day, according to their light, to make the most of it will, as the years pass, have increasing cause to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Depend upon it, the religion of Jesus is God's last word to the soul of man. And how should not we prize the privilege of having received it! Surely this privilege is not a thing to be taken for granted—to be acquiesced in with the tranquil languid apathy with which a Pagan or a Mahometan might receive from his parents his hereditary creed. Each Christian here should glow with a personal sense of love for our Divine Redeemer; and this sense must be based on a felt need of Him, and on the recollection that only in the fulness of time He came to satisfy the wants of an expecting world. Mark His own words, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them." Why thus blessed? Because Christ, known and loved, is the revelation of the character and the heart of God. Why thus blessed? Because Christ, known and loved, is the Fount of pardon, grace, and strength for lost and sinful man. Once more, why thus blessed? Because Christ—and this, we may say reverently, was in His own Divine mind and in the mind of His Apostle—because Christ, revealed to man as incarnate, teaching, crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, closes a long period of weary expectation,—because He is the Rest of souls after centuries of labour,—because He is the Dawn of day after long ages of darkness and twilight. "When the fulness of time was come God sent forth," from His abyss of eternal glory, "His Son, made of woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Let us pray that in thought and act we may duly prize that which was so long withheld—that for which our Jewish predecessors were prepared by the tutorial services of their ancient law. Let us, indeed, thank our good God for the gifts of nature—"for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," but above all, let us thank Him, now and until the end, "for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ."

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 12TH, 1877.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."—GAL. iii, 24.

LAST Sunday we were considering the place and use of the law of Moses, in the religious education of the people of Israel. The law, it appeared, was a tutor entrusted with the responsible duty of bringing Israel down to the School of Jesus Christ; and this duty was discharged, partly by the voice of prophecy, partly by the symbolic teaching of the sacred ceremonies, and partly, or rather, chiefly, by the sense of guilt and the sense of weakness in the conscience of the people of Israel—by the moral precepts given by God to Israel, but which Israel could not keep. This threefold guidance of the law was not, by any means, irresistible. It was actually declined by a majority of those for whom it was intended, but it was sufficient for all sincere souls looking out for traces of God's will, and anxious to make the most of anything they could find.

And so in the treatment of our subject last Sunday afternoon the law had brought its pupil to the door of the School of Christ; and to-day we have to consider what Christ, our Lord, will do for him that the law could not do; in other words, what is meant by the justification by faith which the Apostle says was the final purpose of this long providential guidance. "The law was a tutor to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith."

"That we might be justified by faith." Truly, these are words across which the fierce passions of controversy have swept for centuries; and

controversies are apt to leave deposits which obscure, even in sincere and simple minds, the sense of the sacred writer when he wrote the words. What does the Apostle mean by "justified"? He means made just or righteous. And what is righteousness or justice? As applied to man, it means a man's being as he should be: it means the conformity—the inner and true conformity—of his life with the standard of that which is good—absolutely good and true. One of the questions which prominently engaged the attention of the Jewish doctors was this—How it was possible for men to attain to righteousness or justice; and their answer always was, "By keeping the law." For them the law was the rule of righteousness. The Jew who kept the law was righteous. But then, the question which St. Paul pressed on them, again and again, was whether any Jew did really keep it; or rather, as we said last Sunday, he quoted the law itself with very great effect, to show that, so far from being kept, it was, as a rule, neglected. "There is," said the law, "none righteous, no, not one;" and, "therefore," concludes the Apostle—"therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

And thus the question arises whether any other method of justification—that is, of becoming what we should be—is attainable. And St. Paul answers that question in the text. The law, he said, led its best pupils down to the School of Christ that they might be justified, not by their own efforts to obey its precepts, but by a very different process, which would in the end, indeed, secure obedience and a great deal else—that they might be justified by faith.

And here a difficulty presents itself, which has very naturally and very seriously exercised thoughtful minds in successive ages, and not least in our own. How is it possible, men ask, that such a mere motion or emotion of the soul, as faith, can achieve this startling and solid result—the making a soul to be as it should be before a holy God? A change of conduct—yes, that, they conceive, may make the necessary difference. Conduct is something tangible, something producible. Conduct is a thing which can be weighed and measured. But faith—how airy, how unsubstantial, how disconnected from any solid, permanent results on character. How nearly allied to the fanciful—to the imaginative. How can faith justify? How can so serious an effect be traced to so inadequate or ineffective a cause? Now, the answer to this inquiry can only be given by stating what faith really is. And, perhaps, we shall best state what faith is while we proceed to answer the question, how it is that faith justifies or makes men as they should be before God, the All-seeing, the All-holy.

Now, here we may observe at the outset that, looking at the surface of the matter, faith does, for the believing man, at least one great and striking service, which of itself goes some way to making him what he should be. Faith raises the aims, the purposes, the thoughts of man from the seen to the unseen—from the material to the immaterial—from earth to or towards heaven. What is man's condition without faith—without that

world of glorious but unseen realities which faith makes present? It is the condition of a slave. Unbelieving man is always a slave—the slave of nature, the slave of matter. When no higher world than the world of sense is open to man's view, he falls back under the cruel and exacting bondage of sense and nature. His horizon is that of his bodily senses—neither more nor less. His thoughts and feelings are bounded by that which he can see—can taste—can handle or claw—can smell. To him the visible world is the universe. To him, he himself and his brother man is but an animal—a magnificent animal, no doubt, yet nothing but an animal. He notes with eager and jealous accuracy how the processes of birth and growth, and disease, and death, and decomposition, are the same in his own case and that of the brutes around him. With him, feeling is only nervous sensibility; thought is only phosphorus,—the soul, a non-existent abstraction which man in his petty vanity has coaxed out of the higher illusions of his senses. And thus he buries his thought deep in the very folds of matter. And his thought, mark you, may be all the while exceptionally keen and strong, yet not therefore the less enslaved to matter. Perhaps he has no turn for abstract speculations, and nevertheless in the absence of faith he is still occupied—nearly or wholly occupied—by that which comes in contact with the senses. His shop or his broad acres, or his family circle, or his enjoyments, are for him the universe; he sees no horizons beyond. And since nothing is more certain than the law whereby we men—each one of us—become likened to that on which we gaze—heavenly, if we are looking upward—earthly, or worse, if we are looking downward—it follows that the man who lives in and for matter will gather more and more of its thick grossness around his spirit.

And if his understanding warns him that the material world, which is his all, will pass, and if, in his higher moments, voices sound from out the depths of his being to protest impatiently that matter does not satisfy, still the motto of those who are taking their fill of sense, whether in its grosser or more refined forms, is, in the last resort, always this, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The nobler minds of every generation have felt the misery of this. They have felt that man was meant for a higher destiny than this enslavement to nature, to matter, to sense; and, in the absence of any better expedients, they have endeavoured to provide an escape by the exercise of the intelligence, and the exercise of the imagination—in other words, by poetry and by philosophy.

Poetry is, at least very frequently, the endeavour to invest human life with the glow and beauty of a higher sphere. Poetry is the protest of the human soul against enslavement to the prosaic uniformity of materialised existence. Poetry is the effort of the imagination to provide an outlook for all in man that will not—that cannot—consent to believe that man is nothing but a highly organised animal. And philosophy is the endeavour to ascend without the emotion which is characteristic of poetry—to ascend from that which meets the senses to that which is beyond the senses—to mount always from the observed effect to the hidden and producing cause—to construct, if it may be, an account and a theory of universal being, and

in the process of doing so, to provide for the thought of man an asylum, or rather a throne, beyond and above the frontiers of matter. And thus, in their different ways, philosophy and poetry imply the degradation of merely materialised life by their efforts to better it. And I am very far from denying that they have, each of them, made noble contributions to the higher side of human existence. Sometimes, indeed, in the great Christian ages, they have been the willing handmaids of faith herself ; but, even in the centuries when this was impossible, they have done something to raise the human spirit out of the narrow prison-house of matter. And Homer, and Æschylus, and Socrates, and Plato, with whatever reserves, will be names held in high honour to the end of time. But, whatever poetry and philosophy might achieve for a few individuals, or in the hands of great masters, they do not, in the long run, free the minds of men from the tyranny of matter. Indeed, their fitful efforts to achieve this, may remind us of the flying machine which it was attempted to construct some thirty years ago on the banks of the Thames. Imagination—such is the verdict of experience—imagination, if unsustained by a heaven-born companion like faith, does but mount upwards in one generation to surrender itself in the next, almost at discretion, to the grossest suggestions of the senses. And philosophy, if not based on certainties beyond the reach of sense, does but construct its imposing abstractions in one age to shatter them into fragments in the next, and then it ends, as with the Epicureans of antiquity—as with the school which has last appeared on the scene, in Germany—it ends by plunging headlong into matter with a new and impetuous enthusiasm, and prostituting its powers to reconstructing the very fetters from which, centuries ago, in its fresh and early youth, it promised us emancipation.

No, brethren, if man is to be freed from the empire of sense and nature, it must be through his endowment with a new faculty, such as is faith ; and faith is a new kind of sight which opens upon the soul a world wholly beyond the reach of the bodily senses. Faith is practically a new sense—a sense whose business it is to discern God, and all that teaches His nature and His action upon the world and upon mankind.

Faith makes the man who possesses it to differ from the man who has it not, much as a person in the enjoyment of good bodily sight differs from a blind man. Faith, as the Apostle puts it, is the substance of things hoped for ; it is the evidence of things not seen. It is evidence to itself—sufficient evidence—of the reality of its object ; and thus faith cannot but at least elevate man, with the unseen world spread out before him—the magnificence, the infinitude of the Divine Being—the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ upon His throne, both God and man—the unnumbered angelic intelligences around the throne—the little suspected, but constant, incessant, communications passing between earth and heaven. Faith introduces the soul of man to a new sphere in which the soul is insensibly bettered, if only by this—by having its attention distracted from the petty material interests of daily human life, and fixed on the splendours of the unseen—of the eternal ; and thus faith does raise the soul of man heavenwards, and

this elevation of the soul, more solid and permanent than anything which can possibly be provided by poetry or philosophy, in that it brings the soul face to face with the true and the unchanging Being, is of itself a considerable step in the direction of making a man what he should be—in other words, of his justification.

And a second service which faith renders to man, is this : it expands and strengthens all the departments of his spirit's life—his will and his affections not less than his understanding. And this wide and comprehensive scope of its action upon the soul of itself does much to make man to be what he should be, since not one power or faculty is invigorated by it, but all. There we come face to face with a great and common misconception—the mistake, I mean, of supposing that faith is only a bare act of apprehension—only a simple movement of the understanding apprehending truth beyond the province of sense. My brethren, such an act of apprehension as this can only be faith by courtesy, for faith in its origin, as well as in its growth and vitality, is a prompting of the heart and the will, at least as much as of the understanding. “With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness,” and this moral element in faith is the guarantee of its power to change the character. If we doubt this, let us try to explain to ourselves how it is that of two heathens similarly circumstanced, to whom the Gospel is preached by a Christian missionary, one accepts, and the other rejects it ; or how it is, as we may see in many an English home, that, of two brothers who have had equally the same education, one is a devout Christian and the other an unbeliever. The explanation which is often given refers this difference to God's secret and eternal predestination of souls. The old words, “He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth,” seem to yield a stern but an adequate solution. But God's predestination of souls, however true and solemn a fact, is only half of the truth which explains the soul's destiny. It is equally true, though we may be unable to reconcile this truth with the foregoing—it is equally true that every soul determines its own destiny, and that God's predestination is never really arbitrary in the sense of being independent of the soul's secret, self-determined history. When, of the two heathens I am considering, one man accepts the faith as it is proposed to him, and the other rejects it—this, we may be sure, so far as the man is concerned, is not an accident : it is an effect of causes which have been already long in duration. If these two men have known from infancy nothing else, they have known this—that there is a distinction between right and wrong, since this knowledge is part of the human soul. What is right and what is wrong—that, they may have apprehended very imperfectly. They cannot have been ignorant that this primal distinction exists. And this distinction of itself, observe—this distinction implies a law—a law of right as distinct from wrong ; and a law implies a Lawgiver. Who is He ? What is He ? What can be known about Him ? Will He ever reveal Himself ? These are questions which will be repeated again and again in the one mind, eager, by searching, to find out God—ready to make the most of anything which he may disclose about himself ; but they will be repressed and

silenced in the other mind, as if they were the mere echoes of some stupid superstition. The distinction between right and wrong, itself, it has been said, by one who felt thus, in the midst of Christian civilisation, can only be upheld by a man with a bad digestion. Well, then, on this original difference in the way of treating the sense, the implanted sense of right and wrong, will subsequently depend the different kinds of welcome given to the missionary—nay, the grave difference between faith and unbelief. The one man wishes to know nothing of the author of the moral law that haunts him. The other wishes to know as much as he can. And thus, to the one man, the evidence that God has revealed Himself, will appear wholly insufficient. To the other, it will seem to be nothing less than overwhelming.

And thus we see how faith is originally prompted by the moral affections, and the will—how, in point of fact, it grows directly out of these. Men believe, because they wish to believe, if they can, and think that the evidence they have warrants them in doing so. They reject belief, as a rule, because there is a secret warp in their will against the truths which are the objects of faith. "Light," said our Lord—"Light is come into the world, but men love darkness better than light because their deeds are evil." And as faith is cradled in the heart and the will, so it is never independent of them. It is an act of the moral nature, as well as of the understanding, from first to last. No doubt the word "faith" is used, by an accommodation, of mere unfruitful knowledge of Divine things, as when St. James says, that the devils believe and tremble. The devils think of God just as a scientific man might think of a natural catastrophe, which he was certain would occur—say the outbreak of a volcano, or a hurricane. They might think of God with intelligence, with curiosity, but also with aversion. Having, as they have, at command, the opportunities of disembodied spirits, whether good or evil, they cannot close their eyes to God's existence—to His power; but they recognise Him only to fear and to hate Him. They believe, and yet they tremble. This is an extreme example of the apprehension of God divorced from love. But something like it may be observed in all who hold the truth in unrighteousness. The faith, of which St. Paul says so much in his Epistles, is inseparable from love—inseparable in life and fact, though quite separable in idea in our own way of looking at it. As the illuminated understanding gazes on the majesty and on the attributes of God—on the person and the redeeming work of Christ—the heart is withal kindled, and the will is braced. Faith which deserves the name worketh ever and it worketh by love. Faith may be taken to pieces by students and divines; its elements may be sorted out; its mental element may be studied apart from the ingredients of love and of resolution which go to make it up, just as the anatomist in our hospitals may treat the arterial system apart from the nervous system of the human body, although, in the living subject, each is essential to its vitality. We may, if we like, fix our eyes only on the concave, but it always implies the convex. Those who have gone farthest in the direction of saying that faith,

considered as pure mental apprehension of the person and merits of Christ, can justify before God, have not, so far as I know, ventured to say that any one human being is justified who is quite without a ray of the love of God in his soul. No. Read through the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to see what faith is in itself—how practical, how productive a thing it is—how much it leads those who really possess it, upon occasions, to do and to suffer; and then you will understand how it enriches the whole inward life—how powerfully it contributes to make man what he should be—in other words to his justification.

But, thirdly and finally, the greatest service which faith renders is this: it receives at God's hand the perfect righteousness of Christ. Faith is itself a hand which the soul extends towards the heavens, or with which it grasps the Redeemer's cross. My brethren, that which really makes us men what we should be is not—cannot be—in or of ourselves. It comes to us from without—from the one perfect and sinless Being. And faith is the receptive faculty, or the receptive act, whereby the soul makes this prerogative gift of justification altogether its own. St. Paul is never tired of saying that man cannot be as he should be—that he cannot be just or righteous—without Jesus Christ. The Jew cannot, because, although he had a revealed law, he did not keep it. The heathen cannot. He, too, has a natural law written on his heart, but he falls short of it. The heathen do not seem, so far as the Apostle's experience goes, to have supposed that they were absolutely righteous. The Jew did go about to establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God. But the hard fact is that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and, therefore, it is that justification, properly speaking, can only come to us from without. Faith itself would not justify. Faith would lack its elevating, its productive power, if it had not before it an object utterly independent of human sin and of human weakness—an object divine, unchanging, immaculate. We cannot raise ourselves from the dust. A moral law of gravitation keeps the fallen race down. We must be lifted, if at all, by a hand reached out to us from above. If justified at all, we must be "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Yes, Christ Jesus, Who alone of those who have worn the human form is as He should be—Whose life, public and secret, conforms perfectly to the absolute rule of right—Christ Jesus, the beloved Son in Whom the All-perfect Father is well pleased is—the Source of justification to all His brethren. He has done away with their imperfections by bearing their sins in His body, on the tree. He has given them a share in His obedience—His transcending and prevailing merits. He is their peace. He is made to them wisdom, and righteousness, and justification, and redemption. It is not that His righteousness is accredited to them by a kind of fiction, without being conveyed. It is accredited or imputed because it is already in His purposes of mercy conveyed—because, in His generous love, He consents to share it with the poorest and the weakest of His brethren. On His part, this great gift, purchased in its

completeness on His cross, is conveyed by His Spirit and by His sacraments. His Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, because it is His work to make us partakers in the perfect manhood of the Divine Redeemer. His sacraments could have no place at all in a religion like His unless it were a place of the very first importance. Mere graceless forms would be intruders in a dispensation where forms and shadows have given place once for all to the everlasting realities. It is through these channels that He dispenses what He has won—nay, rather, what He is. “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” “The bread that I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

But, on our part, how are these treasures to be claimed? How is the human soul to grasp this righteousness of God in Christ? The answer is, “By faith.”

Faith is the hand which the soul holds out in order to receive the gifts of heaven. In the case of every adult it is indispensable. God may, in His mercy, take infants up in His arms and bless them. The grace of regeneration, like the gift of natural life, may be conferred on those who are as yet unconscious of its greatness. But, as Augustine has said, “He Who made us without ourselves—He Who re-made us without ourselves—will not save us without ourselves,”—without our conscious and deliberate acceptance of His salvation. And this acceptance of God’s final gift is effected by faith. Faith is the spiritual act whereby the soul associates itself with the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ—whereby it makes His righteousness, His obedience, His sufferings, its own—whereby it lays strong hold upon His cross, as on the very source and warrant of its victory—whereby it draws from His sacraments the virtue which He in His redemptive love has lodged in them—whereby the sinner, penitent and self-renouncing, is forthwith clad in his garments of salvation, and covered with His robe of righteousness, and bidden to sit down in the heavenly places in the eternal Father’s home. Yes, faith is the action of the awakened soul, consciously face to face with its Redeemer and its God. In a being capable of it, it is indispensable. Without faith there may be vigorous physical and mental life, but the spirit is dead. It must raise us from the dust of earth. It—the product of affection and of will—must rouse will and affection to renewed activity. Above all, it—faith—the spirit of prayer—must be a suppliant, an importunate suppliant, kneeling on the steps of the throne of heaven to receive for man—we may dare to say to claim for man—the perfections which man cannot himself command, and which alone can make himself to be what he should be—the priceless gift of his justification through Christ. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.”

Let us rouse ourselves before we leave this church to beg God to give us in new measure this great and necessary grace, without which, as His Apostle has said, it is impossible to please Him. Now, as in bygone days, faith is given—faith is strengthened—in answer to prayer. “Lord, increase our faith.” “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” These breathings of the human soul eighteen centuries ago are not less powerful with God now than in the days of old, nor are the issues which depend upon their being answered less momentous, whether in time or in eternity.

HAVING ONE'S REWARD.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

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"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."—MATT. vi. 2.

OUR Lord repeats these words three times in the course of His Sermon on the Mount, and we may therefore conclude that He means us to pay particular attention to them. He is contrasting the outward obedience which was paid by the Pharisees to their own Jewish law and its rules, with that inward and sincere service which He expected from His own disciples. And in doing this He passes in review three several duties—almsgiving, prayer, fasting. Tobit's advice to his son was already a standing maxim of Jewish piety. "Prayer," he said, "is good with fasting and alms and righteousness." The language of Cornelius to St. Peter shows what was the practice of a pious convert from heathenism to the religion of Israel in the days of the Apostles. Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house. And behold a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thy alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." Alms, prayer, fasting—these were the three main duties in the life of a pious Jew, and in this order of importance. Alms, prayer, fasting—these were to be, to the end of time, duties for all pious Christians, but not quite in this order of importance, nor yet suggested to the Christian conscience by the same class of motives as to that of the Jew. Our Lord's discussion of these duties—almsgiving, prayer, fasting—follows, we can see, a regular plan. First of all He describes the corrupt Jewish practice in the case of each duty. Then He observes all that was secured by it. Then He lays down what He expects from His own true servants. Lastly He assures them of a reward which will follow obedience.

He begins with almsgiving. "When," He says "thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men:" then

He adds, "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." This was the way of the Pharisees, or, as our Lord calls them, the actors—the hypocrites. In contrast with it He lays down what is to be the rule for Christians. "But thou, when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly." And next as to prayer. "The hypocrites," He says, "love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men." He adds again, "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." This was the way of the ostentatious Pharisees. Christian prayer was to be offered on a different principle. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." And, lastly, He notices fasting. "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast." He adds a third time, "Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward." Such was the Jewish fasting of the day. Our Lord's disciples—they were to fast also, but from a different motive. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

In these three strophes—for our Lord was really speaking in poetry—there is a double contrast. There is a contrast between the performances, and there is a contrast of the rewards. The work which is meant for the eye and the approbation of men is placed side by side with the work which is offered simply to God as the true Lord and Master of human wills, Whose approval is of the first, or, rather, of solitary importance. The alms given to attract attention to the giver are contrasted with the alms given in secret. The prayers offered in the synagogues and at the corners of the streets are contrasted with the prayers said in the secrecy of the closet. The fasting proclaimed to all the world by the disfigured countenance is contrasted with the fasting disguised from the world's eye by the anointed head and the washed face and the cheerful countenance. And after the contrast of the performances there follows the contrast of the rewards. Each class of workman has his reward, and it is in keeping with the aim of his effort. Those who give alms and pray and fast, in order to win human approval, do succeed, upon the whole, in securing what they want. "They have their reward." And those who give alms and pray and fast, in order to carry out the will of God so far as they know it—these too succeed (such is His mercy) in securing what they want. "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly."

"They have their reward." As these words fall once and a second and a third time from the Divine lips of Christ, we seem to hear in them a threefold lesson. They proclaim a truth: they suggest a contrast: they pronounce a sentence.

"They have their reward." Here we have, first of all, a profound truth about human nature. Man, as man, works for an object, or, as our Lord calls it, for a reward. The lower creatures work without any object or end in view. They have no horizon beyond the mechanical action in which they are engaged. They eat, they walk, they toil, without any sort of accompanying reflection. They meet, as best they can, the necessity, or they address themselves to the enjoyment, of the moment: but they do not connect it with what has preceded or with what will

follow it. Still less do they give it a place in a protracted effort which is to result in something beyond itself. With man, gentle or simple, barbarous or civilised, Christian or heathen, it is otherwise. Man's reason imposes upon him the necessity of seeking, in or beyond his action, an end of some kind to be secured by it. If man makes an expenditure of time and strength, this is with a view to some kind of result which reason demands even if imagination should be left to describe it. Be the action itself trivial or important—the exercise of muscle or the exercise of mind; be its scene the humblest of peasant homes or the proudest of imperial palaces; it is, as human action, directed—directed ever—towards an object. That object may be near or remote; it may be within reach; it may be unattainable; it may be precious or utterly worthless; it may be earthly and degrading, or supersensuous and divine; but be this as it may, the law of rational human action holds ever good. It is never objectless for a single moment, since to be objectless is to cease to be human. And our Divine Lord Who had created human nature, before in His love and by His incarnation He made it his own that He might restore it perfectly—He pointed to this rule of our human action when He said of one class of His creatures, "They have their reward."

And here an objection will possibly be raised which we must pause for a moment to consider.

"Do you mean to say," it will be asked, "that there is no such thing as disinterested work? Does man never do what is generous what is right, without some tangible aim beyond it? Are you, the preachers of the Divine self-sacrifice—are you to echo that shallow maxim of worldly cynicism which tells us that every man has his price?" Now here, my brethren, there is a confusion of thought between pursuing a noble and disinterested object and pursuing no object at all. At bottom, this objector would seem to think that the only objects worth the name are selfish and earthly objects. And yet the smile of the good God upon the recesses of the conscience is not less an object, I apprehend, than the public approval of our fellow men. The moral joy of doing what is right because it is right is just as much an end of action as the material gain—the hard cash, if you like it—which is paid down for doing what is wrong. "Every man has his price." Doubtless, the cynic who shaped that saying meant what is a libel on our human nature. He meant to say that in every man—even in those who seem to be noblest in action and most disinterested in purpose, most consistent, most persevering in their elevation above the average selfishness of their fellow men—there is some hidden passion, some secret weakness, some undetected flaw, if you could only get at it, which, once reached, would place them on a level with the rest of the race. They owe, so he thinks, their apparent elevation to the accident of not having been as yet approached on the vulnerable side. They agree with what Satan said of Job, "Doth Job serve God for naught? Hast thou not made a hedge about him and about his house and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blest the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." No, brethren, this is not wisdom. This is mere vulgar and shallow suspiciousness. In all generations there are some men of whom it is not true that they have their price, if by "their price" be meant something that will appeal to the lower instincts, whether they be mental or bodily, of our fallen nature. But in another and a higher sense, we may readily admit, the proverb is true enough. Those who have risen,

by God's grace, above human crime—even above human care—the best saints and servants of Jesus Christ—these too, in one sense, have their price. It cannot, indeed, be rendered to them by any earthly paymaster, but it is a price, nevertheless. It is the object for which they have lived, and worked, and suffered—the eternal approval of the perfect moral Being Whose they are and Whom they serve. They are no real exception to the rule that every man has an object, be it what it may—that all human life and work is directed towards what our Lord calls a reward. And in this way the Pharisees, too, of Christ's day obeyed this law. They had a definite object before them—the good opinion of their contemporaries; and they secured it by their efforts. They had their reward.

"They have their reward." Here, secondly, there is suggested, tacitly but forcibly, a tragic contrast—"Their reward." There is then, it seems, another reward than theirs—another and a higher. Let us, for a moment, turn our eyes towards it—the true reward of men—the prize of prizes for which any other must be a paltry substitute. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself"—those words are the secret—they are the key—of creation. If God was to create at all—let us dare to say it with reverence—He could not do otherwise. The self-existent, the all-perfect Being could not surround Himself with creatures who were to find the final satisfaction of their various powers and instincts in something other than Himself. He is the End of all beings, as He is the Centre and Source of all existences, by an inevitable necessity, because He is God. The irrational creation subserves this His purpose by a resistless law. The suns, the animals, the plants, cannot but praise the Lord as they obey the laws which govern them. They are fated each one, by the happiest of necessities, to promote His glory. With man it is otherwise. Man has the majestic—it may be the fatal—prerogative of deciding whether he will serve his Creator or not. The sovereign gift of free will which is man's highest distinction among the creatures involves the power of deciding whether to live for God or for some one or some thing else. But, however man may decide, the law of his happiness—the law of his perfection—remains the same. Only one Being can say to man, as He said to the patriarch some four thousand years ago, "I will be thy exceeding great reward." There is that in man—that, my brethren, in each one of you—which nothing short of God can satisfy. There are inexplicable longings, there are depths of restlessness, there are unexplored chasms of possible despair, out of which the soul of man cries for an infinite, for a perfect, being, as its true end and object in existence. "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice." And He does satisfy or, as our Lord puts it, rewards the soul that gives itself to Him. All the mysterious yearnings of the heart, all the bright Utopian visions of boyhood, all the earnest dreamings of the higher and purer hours of later life, find their counterpart and their explanation in Him, the Infinite, the Eternal. "I will be thy exceeding great reward." So it was in the days of earlier and imperfect revelations in the beginnings of human history. So it is now. So it ever shall be. Those only are kept in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on Him. The passion for truth, the passion for beauty, the demand for law, the sense of awe, the instinct of wonder, of reverence, of exhilaration—all, all of these, are satisfied in the eternal God. They are satisfied in no stunted sense here and now in this sphere of sense and time. They are satisfied perfectly in the endless beatific vision of the saints in heaven.

This, then, was the reward of which our Lord spoke. "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Heaven means, at

bottom, not an infinitely magnificent palace or pleasure garden, but lasting contact between a created nature and its God. Pleasure was said by a great heathen thinker to consist in the point of contact between a faculty and its object; and man's true and perfect happiness consists, in like manner, in contact—contact the closest and the most uninterrupted—with the Being Who has Himself shaped every faculty of man's existence that it might find its satisfaction only in Himself. Men sometimes speak of certain abstract objects as the reward of their efforts in life. They live, they say, for virtue, or they live for truth, or they live for philosophy, or they live for philanthropy. Brethren, if these high-sounding names are real things to them, then they live for God. God is the eternal loving-kindness from which all human love of man must flow. God is the everlasting wisdom, the eternal truth, the unerring philosophy, of which all that can present itself to a created intelligence is a spark or a shadow. God is Himself the absolute virtue—virtue in its personal, and its self-existent form, so that to live really for virtue is to live for God. In God all of these—the noblest aspirations of man—meet and are satisfied. They are all included in that comprehensive promise, “I will be thy exceeding great reward.”

“They have their reward.” In these words we hear, thirdly, a judicial sentence which the Divine Speaker passes upon some of the men of His time. “They have their reward.” The original means that they have it altogether: they have it so entirely that there is nothing to be looked for in the future. The meaning is that they have contracted for a certain stipend and they have received it. They have received it, and they cannot still expect what they have already received. They have made the best of their bargain, such as it is, and there is an end of it. This is the language of fine irony: it is the language too of deep compassion.

Certainly it is irony. The Pharisees gave alms, they prayed, they fasted, for a certain consideration. They believed themselves to be men of hard, practical sense without any foolish fancies or enthusiasms. They wished to get the good opinion of their contemporaries. They worked hard and they succeeded. Certainly it was not a high object, but then it was the height of their ambition. As they passed along the streets, men saluted them as the best men of the day—as serious, moderate, respectable—as the true representatives of all that was great and noble in ancient Israel. As they gave alms in the public places, and prayed, visibly, audibly, in the midst of crowds, and bore in their emaciated persons the proofs of long and painful fasting, men remarked that the spirit of Moses, and Joshua, and Elijah, and Daniel, and the Maccabees still lived on among these worthy and devoted descendants of Abraham. It was the very recognition which they had all along in view. And our Lord, as if drily registering a fact which everyone might observe for himself—our Lord said simply that they had attained it. Nobody could say that their efforts had been wasted. They had worked for popularity and credit, and it was ready to their hands.

“They had their reward.” If this is irony, it is much more. There is an undertone of deep pathos. It was pathetic that the foremost men in Israel should be thus giving their money for that which was not bread, and toiling for that which could not satisfy. Were not these men the children of psalmists and of prophets, the children of saints and of patriarchs, each and all of whom in every variety of strain had insisted upon the supreme claims of God—insisted upon those claims so jealously, so peremptorily, as to exclude all human rivals? Was this, then, the outcome of the religion of Sinai—this of the Mosaic revelation of the

unique majesty of God? Did this result from the favours lavished on the chosen race during a thousand years of triumph and of disaster? Had these men been really trained in the most spiritual school known to the ancient world, only to seek for a recompense which the higher minds, at least, among the heathen would have treated—nay, did treat—with deliberate neglect?

Yes, it was pathetic for two reasons. This reward which the Pharisees worked so hard to win was transient. It was the creature of a day. The men who enjoyed it most might easily outlive it. Popular consideration cannot be ensured. Its motto is "Hosanna!" now,—to-morrow "Crucify!" It may be courted successfully: it is an inconstant visitant. It disappears as rapidly, as capriciously, as it came. Nothing seems to me more pathetic in the course of English history than the closing years of Queen Elizabeth, conscious that she had outlived the acclamations of her subjects, and sinking gradually into her grave with the sense of having aimed at an object which was already dissolving before her eyes.

And then this reward, considered as a certificate of merit, was worthless even when it seemed to be most enjoyable. What was the real dignity of the tribunal which awarded it? What was the true value of the sanction that was pronounced? How could the mixed multitude, for whose judgment in any other matter those very Pharisees would have felt and professed scant respect, really give moral satisfaction by approval of their actions? The matter would not bear a moment's reflection. But then, vanity does not reflect. Vanity lives upon the surface of life. It makes the very most of the trifles which feed its successive moods and caprices. They are trifles; they are worthless; but it has its reward.

Let us endeavour to carry away one or two practical lessons.

My brethren, these words of our Lord Jesus Christ suggest the true idea of a Christian life. A Christian life is, above all things, a great venture: it is a stake upon the eternal future. This is one of the very deepest differences between it and the lives of men who are not governed by Christian principle. The ordinary man of the world says to himself, "Everything after death is, at best, uncertain, and, therefore, I shall make what I can out of the hours of this life as they pass by me. I shall enjoy them as best I may"; and he, after his fashion, has his reward. The Christian says, "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." His reward is to be the product of an investment in the future. He dreads nothing so much as the risk of drawing it before the time. He sees the true, the deep, the merciful meaning of those solemn words of Jesus Christ, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you," and "Blessed are ye when men shall revile and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My Name's sake." It does not, indeed, follow that, because a man is abused or is unsuccessful in this life, therefore he will be glorified in the next; but, at any rate, there is a safety in being unpopular, in being unrecognised, in being thought little of and denounced, which those who have staked their all upon the world after death gratefully recognise. And there is a danger about success—about the kind words of friends—about the smile and the homage of society—about the patronage of the powerful and the great—about recognition of good and generous and religious deeds. It is a danger which ought to haunt a soul that is living for its hereafter. Each man must ask himself the question, "Is my reward being had now? Is anything left to be given by-and-by at the hands of Christ?"

On the other hand it does not necessarily follow that all good works

done publicly forfeit God's approval hereafter. He Who said of the Jews, "They have their reward," said also to His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." Some Christians owe publicity in what they do to others. They have to act not merely in view of God's invisible glory, but so as to show a good example. This is true of all who are in positions of responsibility or influence. It is true of rulers, of clergymen, of parents, of landowners, of masters of schools, of heads of families. These, all of them, are bound to works of mercy,—bound to prayer and to self-denial, and bound, moreover, to letting others see that they own the obligation. All will be well with them, too, if, by God's grace, they can be moderately sure of the purity of their intention—of the intention to give glory to God instead of to get glory from man. There is no harm in doing a kindness publicly, or of saying one's prayers in the midst of a great crowd, if the publicity is put up with instead of being sought,—if the real, the deepest inward intention be to do service to the Father which seeth in secret. Publicity is not fatal to our loyalty to the precept "Whether ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God," because God's glory may imperatively require that a man should confess Christ before men, in whatever way; and the intention to glorify God will most assuredly transfigure the act, just as a beautiful soul lights up a rude or an ugly countenance.

What our Lord's words come to is this—that a good intention to serve God is the very soul of a good action, whatever be its outward form. A work, good in its outward form, may be utterly vitiated by its inspiring motive. It may resemble a man, such as tradition speaks of, with a beautiful face, yet possessed by a devil. It may be fair and glorious in the eyes of men, yet disowned as having on it the trade-mark of the enemy—disowned before God and His angels. The poison of an impure motive, the love of mere human praise, will make the kindest deeds, the heaviest sacrifices, the most painful efforts, worse than useless. Too easy is it now, as eighteen centuries ago, to enjoy our reward here and now,—to have no part in—no expectations for—the everlasting future.

On the other hand, a sincere desire to glorify God, although it cannot make an act, such, for instance, as theft and murder, which is intrinsically bad, anything else than what it is and must be, can and does make acts otherwise trivial and insignificant things of high value in the kingdom of heaven. A bit of paper is, by itself, sufficiently worthless. If signed by a man of credit it may be a cheque for ten thousand pounds. Hundreds of the actions of a Christian throughout the day would be utterly insignificant, if the intention to glorify the all-glorious God in union with the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ did not confer on them a lustre which is altogether independent of their intrinsic worth.

And, lastly, the most practical resolution to take is to endeavour to think of our work in life and of our several occupations as we shall think of them when we are dying. Certain it is that at that solemn hour all that has been done merely to win the praise of man—all that has not been offered sincerely to the all-seeing God,—will be accounted worthless. "Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name cast out devils, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me." The outward splendours of a life of even apostolic devotion will count for little, if there have not been a simple desire within to do what has been done for the glory of the invisible Christ. The applause of mobs, or of literary circles, or of clubs, or of drawing-rooms, or of senates, will then be rated at their true value, as the verdict of mere

human judgments controlled by human passions, and so as unworthy of the aim of an immortal Being. One Being only, in His sanctity, His justice, His majesty, will then be present to the eye of the soul if it be in any sense alive to the solemnities of the moment. "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Think of that hour, my brethren, so inevitable—it may be, so near; and resolve to live for a reward which shall not then appear to be utterly worthless. Resolve to set God always before you, in work as in devotion,—in the business and the relaxations of life, as well as in the hours of silence and reflection. It may be hard at first to think, speak, act, in the consciousness that the eye of an unseen Master is upon you, and with the object of offering to Him what you think and say and do. It may be—it is—hard. Depend upon it, it is worth the effort. Nothing is really gained by that which passes almost before we have time to grasp it. Nothing is lost by momentary sores and disappointments which are the prelude to a future of endless joy.

THE RELATIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT AND THE UNDERSTANDING IN PRAYER.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 19TH, 1877.

"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."—1 Cor. xiv. 15.

To enter into this saying of St. Paul we must remind ourselves of those supernatural gifts which were bestowed in such abundance on the first members of the Church of Christ at Corinth. Among these, two were especially remarkable, and they gave rise to some troublesome controversies, which St. Paul had to settle. These two were the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues. The gift of prophecy was not merely or chiefly the power of predicting future events. "He that prophesieth," says the Apostle, "speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." No doubt it included upon occasions the power of fortelling future events. It was a great deal besides. It was the general power of influencing others by the means of inspired language. And the gift of tongues was not always, or usually, the power of employing a foreign language which had never been learnt by the speaker. This particular power was, indeed, exercised by the Apostles, certainly on the day of Pentecost, and probably on many subsequent occasions; but the gift of tongues in the Church of Corinth was apparently a mystical language, intelligible only to the utterer and to God. "He," says the Apostle, "that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself. He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth him. Howbeit, in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."

Now, there was a great controversy in the Church of Corinth as to which of these two gifts was to be thought most highly of. Each gift had its advocates, and no doubt the advocacy was strengthened in either case by

the force of personal considerations. The friends of a Christian who could utter inspired speech with great effect and power, as possessing the gift of prophecy, thought little of another Christian who could only utter what he had to say in terms which were unintelligible to the world at large; and the admirers of a holy man who could hold constant converse with God in inspired and mystic language—they, too, had their own opinion of the comparatively humble and undistinguished gift of addressing congregations in their mother-tongue with useful but not extraordinary results. St. Paul decides this controversy by pronouncing in favour of the gift of prophecy. "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied; for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues." Again: "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all, yet in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." And his concluding advice is that the Corinthians should "covet to prophesy," but merely "forbid not to speak with tongues."

The reasons for this decision are very instructive—more instructive for us than the decision itself, which has ceased to have any direct practical application in these later ages of the Church. The gift of prophecy is, in St. Paul's eyes, the higher gift, because it is more useful to members of the Church at large. "He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself. He that prophesieth edifieth the Church." The effect of the two gifts is contrasted most emphatically by the Apostle, as follows:—"If the whole Church," he says, "be come together into one place and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all; he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and confess that God is in you of a truth." The gift of tongues was of great interest, great value, to the soul endowed with it. As a rule, it did nothing for others, unless it was accompanied by another supplementary gift of interpretation. St. Paul himself asks, "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" He points out that musical instruments and military signals are useless, unless there is a distinction in the sounds; and then he adds, "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian," or foreigner, "and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." And thus he concludes, "Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret;" and, generally, he advises the Corinthians, forasmuch as they are desirous of spiritual gifts, to neglect the more showy and attractive endowments, and to seek that they may excel to the edifying of the Church.

St. Paul's principle, in deciding upon the relative worth of these two gifts, would be called, nowadays, religious utilitarianism. We shrink from a word like this in such a connection, but it accurately expresses the facts of the case. Prophecy was a useful gift to the Church at large. The gift of tongues was comparatively useless. That was the ground of the apostolic decision. And St. Paul's decision is not at all inconsistent with that other great rule of his, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God." The glory of God in this matter is best

promoted by securing the improvement and edification of man. St. Augustine has said, "God has united His own glory with our highest advantage." Accordingly, in the Apostle's estimate, spiritual gifts take rank according to their capacity for bringing men near to God; and on this ground prophecy is ruled to have precedence of the gift of tongues.

Let us pause for a moment to observe that we have a principle here which should govern our judgment in a great many matters which are often under discussion. The real question is not, What is most brilliant and attractive? but, What is, spiritually speaking, most useful, most edifying? We admire this book, it may be, which everybody is talking about; but that simple manual which we have known from our childhood brings us closer to the realities of conscience and of God. We are delighted with some splendid musical service; but those simple chants and hymns in which we can join do really make Divine worship more easy, more genuine for us. We are impressed by the conversation of some man of great ability and reputation; but somehow, a quiet prosaic person, whom we have known for years, does us more real good—makes us feel less satisfied with ourselves, more anxious to be at peace in our conscience and with our God. It is the old question between the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy. We know how St. Paul decided the question. How do we?

Now, St. Paul's language about prayer is to be explained by what he has been saying about these two gifts of tongues and of prophecy. "I will pray with the spirit: I will pray with the understanding also." In the word "spirit" he glances at the gift of tongues—in the word "understanding," at the gift of prophecy. The gift of tongues was a spiritual impulse, conferring, no doubt, great happiness, great sense of power and expansion, upon the soul which possessed it, but, seemingly, unaccompanied by very distant ideas, or, at any rate, by any power of distinctly conveying them. Prophecy, on the other hand, was nothing if it was not active or, rather, aggressive intelligence. Prophecy was spiritual understanding in full play upon the souls of others. We know what a difference there is between feeling strongly on a subject and having that command of the subject which enables us to instruct or to convince others with respect to it. The gift of tongues was highly spiritualised feeling, taking unusual forms of expressing itself. The gift of prophecy was highly spiritualised thought, devoting itself to the instruction of others. But then this distinction was not so sharp and exclusive as to deprive the first gift of every element of intelligence, or the second of every element of emotion. In the text St. Paul implies that prayer, to be good, must combine that which is essential in both gifts—the warmth of the one with the light of the other. But, then, he lays a stress which we can hardly miss upon the last. "I will pray with the spirit: I will pray with the understanding also."

"I will pray with the spirit." Observe the order of these two elements of prayer. St. Paul does not say, "I will pray with the understanding, and I will pray with the spirit also." That would have been a common, modern way of putting it. "First let us have intelligence," men say, "and then spirituality, if it is to be had." St. Paul, on the other hand, does say, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." The first ingredient in prayer is not intelligence, but movement of the soul—movement of the spirit. The raw material of prayer, so to put it, is a vague aspiration of the soul towards its true object. "Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul

after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God—yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" And the motive of this movement is a sense of need. It is a sense of weakness; it is a sense of dependence. It is perfectly compatible with very shadowy and imperfect perceptions of God. It is the cry of a child towards its parent, whom it sees only indistinctly in the twilight or through the mist. It is an impulse; it is an enthusiasm; it is an emotion; it is, as I have said, a breathing—an aspiration. The raw material of prayer is not—never was—its intellectual element. It is its element of impulse, of love, of moral movement, vigorous and resolute in its upward endeavour, yet vague and indeterminate as to its course and its object. Undoubtedly, very earnest prayer is often compatible with a very slight exercise of the understanding. "I will pray with the spirit" is a resolution which can be carried into practice, if it stands alone, more easily than "I will pray with the understanding" can be carried into practice, if it stands alone, for the understanding alone does not pray. It only thinks; and thought is a very different thing indeed from prayer. Thought about God, about our Lord Jesus Christ, about ourselves, about the eternal future, is not of and by itself that inward ascensional movement towards God, which is always, at bottom, a creation of grace, an impulse from on high, which is the first and essential thing in real prayer. The uninstructed, the young, the very ill, the almost despairing, the broken-hearted—these can say after the Apostle, when they can say but little else, "I will pray with the spirit."

But then he adds—"I will pray with the understanding also." Although the understanding cannot, as we have seen, give the first impact to prayer, it can supply guidance to it. It is very needful, if the original impulse, which is the essence of prayer, is to be brought into shape—is to be made permanently serviceable to the soul. The original energy of prayer is, indeed, supplied by—it is—emotion. Its regulation is secured by the understanding; that is to say, by the understanding illuminated by Divine grace. Without this understanding, the spirit of prayer is like fluid metal, which runs into irregular forms for want of a mould. Without the understanding, the spirit of prayer is like great natural ability which is misused, or is wasted only from want of proper training. Without the understanding, devotional impulse will easily pass into boisterous and even irreverent rhapsody, or it will shrink back into the lifeless monotony of mere form. The understanding takes the devotional impulse or spirit in hand,—rouses it to a jealous and vigorous consciousness,—bids it consider Who that awful and majestic Being is Who is the Object of prayer, what it is that is sought of Him, why He is applied to for this particular benefit, what are the fitting steps or processes in the application. And the understanding thus secures a double result. It introduces point, purpose, order, into what without it would be aimless and unregulated impulse. And it does more: it secures reference. Without injuring the tenderness of the original relations which bind every living soul to its God and its Redeemer, the understanding is there as the perpetual reminder of God's unapproachable majesty, and of the nothingness of every created thing before Him. Nowhere, perhaps, in the Church Services do we feel the action of the understanding keeping steadily in check the forward impulsive tendencies of spirit and emotion more than in the collect which is used this very week, when we address God as a Being Who knows our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, and then beg Him to grant, for the sake of His Divine Son, those things which, for our unworthiness, we dare not, and, for our blindness, we cannot ask.

And here, brethren, we may see our way to one or two conclusions of importance. It can hardly be doubted that the Apostle who placed the gift of prophecy higher than the gift of tongues, and who insisted that prayer must be intelligent as well as devout, would have advised the Church of Christ to offer its public prayers to God in the mother-tongue of each nation within its fold. Before the Reformation, as you know, the public prayers of the Church were either altogether, or for the most part in Latin. In the early ages of the Church, when Latin was spoken throughout the Roman Empire, and was a living language, this was a very natural arrangement in these western countries; but, as time went on, and the old empire fell to pieces, the people at large ceased to speak Latin. They spoke the languages of the races which had overthrown the empire; and thus it came to pass that the language of the Church services was no longer the language of the people, although, undoubtedly, in the southern countries of Europe, the difference between the two was, and is, much less than in England or in Germany, where the national language, instead of being formed out of the Latin, comes from quite a different stock. We can well understand that, when this change was made three centuries ago, many good people were most unwilling to give the old Latin up. They themselves had been accustomed to it from their earliest years in every parish church in England. It had been used in England since England was Christian. On this very spot, in the two cathedrals which preceded that in which we worship this afternoon—on this very spot, as we cannot but remember—it had already been used for some nine hundred years continuously, before the change was made; and those who loved what they were accustomed to might have pleaded with reason that Latin, if any language, is the language of devotion. Its terseness, its resources, its majesty, make Latin prayers welcome to any man who knows the language well, as was the case with the whole educated class at the time of the Reformation. But the people at large—the women, the children, the poor—what of them? They had a first right to consideration. “To the poor the gospel is preached,” was to be from the first a sign of the kingdom of the redemption; and to the poor Latin was a dead language. The sounds might be familiar: they were familiar only as sounds. They were not the vehicles of distinct thoughts—the channels of distinct ideas, of living, energetic convictions. Of course when the people came to church they knew in a general way perfectly well what was going on. Of devotion, of tender apprehension of a majestic presence which they sought and found, those forefathers of ours had, if the truth is to be spoken, often more than we of these later ages. They prayed with the spirit. But then how about the understanding? They could not enter into the words, the sentences, of the public church language. They could only associate themselves devoutly with its general drift and purpose. They knew that something infinitely good and holy was going forward, but beyond this, there was indistinctness. They could and did pray with the spirit. It was the object of the change made at the Reformation that they should pray with the understanding also. It is not possible to doubt, my brethren, that that change was of very great value. It was a real return to the mind of the Apostle. It was a reassertion for the understanding of its rights and duties in public prayer, side by side with those of devotion of the spirit. It reinforced the ardour of devotion by the activity of intelligence. The Latin language was, like the tongues at Corinth, magnificent, but too generally unintelligible; and when she translated the old Latin services which she had used for centuries into the common prayer-book of our own day, the Church of England said with

the Apostle, "As therefore, let me pray with the spirit, but I and my children will endeavour hereafter to pray with the understanding also."

Here, too, we may see the value of a fixed order of prayer. A fixed order of Divine Service is a guarantee of the rights of the understanding as against the eccentricities of unregulated spirit, or enthusiasm, or ill-considered petitions. Undoubtedly mental prayer—prayer without words—prayer prompted from within at the moment, and seizing any words that comes to hand—has a lawful or, rather, a necessary place in the life of the individual Christian. While private prayer must always have certain fixed elements—acts of faith, hope, charity, repentance, the creed, the Lord's Prayer, petitions for protection, for guidance, for perseverance, intercessions for those who have a claim on us, self-surrender to the Divine will—(fixed features of all good private prayer, these, no one of which can be omitted without serious loss to the soul)—it may also well have a variable element, the nature and extent of which will be determined by the need and temper of the individual. There are many things which every soul can only say to God in its own words—many things between God and the soul which will not go into words, but can be prayed somehow notwithstanding. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and He which searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." The best servants of Christ in all generations have devoted time and efforts to the cultivation of this unspoken, unwritten mental prayer; and these silent hours of intercourse between their souls and the Father of spirits have done much to make the greatest of the saints of Christ what they actually were. But the introduction of extempore prayer into common or public worship is a very different matter. Not to dwell on the fact that it is unknown to the usage of the early Church, it is, I believe, in not a few cases, quite fatal to praying with the understanding, which is not, perhaps, the risk which would be most generally attributed to it. In the first place, this kind of prayer is apt to become merely rhapsody, when feeling outruns thought very rapidly, and the necessity of saying something—something to God—is more strongly felt than the necessity of considering well what is said to Him. In the next place, in joining in an extempore prayer, uttered by another, we put ourselves to a very undesirable degree into His hands. The case is very different from that of a sermon, since in listening to a sermon we are only listeners; and if there may be statements which, rightly or wrongly, we are unable to follow, no great harm is done by our dissent. But common prayer is a united address to God, and to maintain a reserved or defiant attitude of mind, while all around us are speaking to God, is very damaging to us and to them, and very dishonouring to Him. And yet, how is it always to be avoided in the case of extempore public prayer? The congregation does not know what is coming. Perhaps from minute to minute the minister himself does not know. There are many petitions about which there can be no question amongst Christians, but there are also petitions addressed to God, commonly, in prayers like these, about which there is room for a great deal of question; and a long extempore prayer is apt to cover a great deal of ground—some of it very debatable ground. It follows, naturally enough, the paths which are traced by the feelings, by the interests, by the convictions, of the person who offers it. It wanders from the region, of the purely spiritual into the region of contemporary human society, or conduct, or politics. There is much to be prayed about in all of these, and thus

it sometimes will, in practice, assume the shape and proportions of a long, argumentative dissertation—I had almost said of a leading article in a paper, with the unusual characteristic of being thrown into the form of petition, and being addressed to the Almighty. Such a prayer naturally contains a great many statements as to the accuracy and advisability of which we may well have failed to make up our minds. But then, before we have time to think, these statements are upon us, challenging not merely our assent, but our willingness to second them in the presence of the All-wise and the All-holy. The alternative is to cease to pray—to separate ourselves from the company of souls gathered in the house of prayer, or else pray with the spirit without the understanding,—to join vaguely in a devotional movement going forward around us without stopping to think what it is precisely that we are asking, or why we ask it. From these embarrassments we are saved by the public formularies of the Church. They are in the hands of everybody. We have ample opportunities of considering their exact drift before we use them; and they are no new experiment in devotion. Most of the collects in the prayer-book have been in use for some fourteen centuries at the least. We, as we join in them, associate ourselves with multitudes of souls who live far from us both in the present and in the past; and this tried, this familiar language, warranted by the experience of believing Christendom, may assuredly be trusted. When we hear it in church we have not to consider for the first time whether we can agree with it. Our duty is simply to throw into it all the determination and spirit we possibly can, for it does the fullest justice to the warmth and movement of the ascending soul; but it also provides adequately for the demands of the understanding. In using it we know what we are about. We have our thoughts and our feelings, both of them, under control. We pray with the spirit; we pray with the understanding also.

And, lastly, we see here the importance of preparation for prayer, especially for those most solemn and effectual of all prayers which are associated with the holy communion. The precept, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house God," is always urgent. Certainly the first essential is that affection and will should be roused; but, this done, the understanding, as the regulator of prayer, must be in good order, unless, indeed, we are to waste our time in the Divine presence, or to do something worse than waste it. As we grow older, brethren, the understanding should have more and more to do with the regulation of devotional impulse—of prayer. As the years fly by a man, and the horizons of thought continually expand, material and the scene of prayer is, or should be, always enlarging. As we pass, first one, and then another mile-stone on the road of life, we should listen for the echoes of that apostolic saying, "Brethren, be not children in understanding, but in understanding be men;" for a man's religious life must keep pace with the growth of his knowledge and of his powers of reflection, or he will assuredly learn to think of his religion as a thing divorced from the practical interests of his life—as a mere reminiscence of his childhood. He will gradually drop, if he does not deliberately reject it. A man's prayers must prompt—must accompany—the most deliberate actions of his life. They must, if it may be, keep abreast—well abreast—of the entire range of his mental and moral effort. New subjects will be constantly crowding for recognition in prayer—new forms of occupation, new friendships, new materials for speculation, new difficulties, anxieties, and trials, new hopes, new fears, the varying fortunes of his family, the course of public events, the conduct of the rulers of the

country, the failures or the triumphs of the Church, the departure one after another of those whom he has known and loved to that other world, and the sense which each day that passes must deepen in his own soul, if he thinks at all, that his own turn, too, must come ere long. All this is material for prayer—material which is constantly accumulating, and which the understanding must arrange, and sift, and digest, before bringing it into the presence of the All-holy and the Eternal. The understanding will, in practice, have more than enough to do without encroaching on the province of spirit. Its task will only worthily be achieved if that task is made a subject of forethought and deliberation in the hours which can be snatched from toil or from rest. At such a time as this there is material enough for prayer ready to the hand of every man who sincerely believes that prayer is a power. Not to mention the sufferings and the struggles of our Christian brethren in Eastern Europe, or the many subjects nearer home which have a claim upon our sympathies, let me remind you this afternoon that some millions of our fellow-subjects in India are threatened with nothing short of extermination by a famine much more terrible and devastating than any of which we have had experience since India has been ours. Already, we are told by the sanitary commissioner in Madras that a million and a half of people are under relief, and that half a million have already perished. Think, for one moment what that means. There is no sufficient reason, alas, to question these dreadful facts; and it is certain that the evil is on a scale which the resources of the Indian government are quite unable to grapple with. Let us Christians pray for the sufferers, believing, as we do, that, distance notwithstanding, our prayers really can and will help them.

But let us do more. The Lord Mayor has opened a fund for their relief at the Mansion House, and he invites all Englishmen, but particularly the citizens of London, to contribute what they can possibly afford to an object which has every claim upon us as Englishmen and as Christians. Let us during the coming week do, each of us, what we can to further this generous effort, and let us remember that to pray sincerely with the understanding is also to attempt to do all that lies in a man's power towards furthering the object of his prayer himself.

THE DAY OF THE LORD.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 2ND, 1877.

"The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."—1 THESS. v. 2.

MANY of us must have wondered sometimes at the boldness of this comparison in which the second coming of our holy and gracious Saviour is likened to the act of the felon who breaks into a man's house at night with intent of plunder and violence. If Scripture did not warrant the figure we should not, we think, have ventured on it. Nay, it may be that an inspired Apostle would hardly have held this language if his Lord and Master had not led the way. The comparison is, in fact, suggested by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and He uses it for a very simple purpose. The figures and similes of Scripture are used to illustrate some single point or points ; and to make any larger application of them than that for which they are destined is to fall into mistakes more or less serious. Here it is not the moral character of the thief : it is the characteristics of his action which are in question. In His great discourse on the destruction of the temple and the end of the world, just before He suffered, our Lord had bidden His disciples, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken through ; therefore, be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." And St. Luke reports the same words as having fallen from our Lord, but, as might naturally have been the case, on a different occasion. Our Lord does not say in so many words that the last day will come as a thief

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comes in the night ; He only refers to the precautions which a prudent householder might take against a thief, as an illustration of the duty of Christians to watch and prepare for the last day. St. Paul draws out into the light the inference which is already latent in the words of Christ—the inference that between the circumstances of the second Advent and the inroad of the thief at night there is, at any rate, some sort of common ground or correspondence.

“The day of the Lord.” By this expression must be meant a day which will be in some unique and pre-eminent sense His day ; for of course all days are, in reality, days of the Lord—His days, Who is the Lord of time as He is the Lord of life. “The heavens are Thine ; the earth also is Thine ; Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.” All time, like all space, is necessarily within the domain of the infinite and eternal Being, and in this sense, day by day, He makes the outgoings of each morning and evening to praise Him, and cannot possibly be restricted to any one period of time as though it alone were His,—as though other days might belong of right to some human or created proprietors. By “the day of the Lord,” to Whom all time of right belongs, is meant that day on which He will take the first place in the thoughts of His creatures. This is the natural sense of such language, whether in the phrase of common life, or in the phrase of the Bible. When we speak of the day of Austerlitz, or of the day of Waterloo, we mean those particular days which will ever be associated in human history with the great battles that were fought on them. When a late psalmist speaks of the day of Jerusalem he means the fatal day of its humiliation and ruin. When Isaiah refers to the day of Midian he is thinking of its memorable overthrow. In these, and like expressions, a day is appropriated to a particular subject, because on that day, for whatever reason, it has had, or will have, a first place in the thoughts of men. The Lord’s day—the only New Testament name for the Christian Sunday—is so called because Christ, by His resurrection from the dead, has made it His own, so that on it we Christians owe to Him, week by week, our first thoughts of gratitude and praise. “This,” to the end of time, “is the day that the Lord hath made. Rejoice and be glad in it.” And the day of the Lord, yet future, is the day on which, most assuredly, all thoughts will turn to Him whether willingly or by constraint—whether in terror or in joy ; the day on which His throne of majesty will supersede all human forms of power—in which His magnificence will dim utterly all human splendours—in which His truth will silence into nothingness all human errors and guesses at truth—in which His justice will take the place of all that is named justice, rightly or wrongly, among the sons of men ; the day in which everything else but He will be lost sight of, and will be as though it were not—in which the eternal reality of His relation to the world and to man will also be the acknowledged reality. As we have just heard in the first lesson, “The loftiness of man shall be bowed, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.”

“The day of the Lord.” We know it by a more familiar name given it

on three occasions by our Lord Himself, and on three, at least by His Apostles after Him : it is the day of judgment. It is the day on which He will bring the vast and complex moral account between Himself and His responsible creatures to a close—to a final, irreversible decision. Certainly He is always judging us as He is always keeping us in life—as He is always watching, always guarding us, moment by moment. From our first hours of real responsibility to our last breath, the successive variations of our exact moral condition have been registered with faultless accuracy in the tablets of the eternal mind. It is not to be supposed for a moment that a day is yet to come, on which, like some human judge travelling on the circuit, He, the Eternal, will discover for the first time, by some laborious legal process—by arguments pleaded before Him, or from the examination of witnesses—what manner of men we severally are.

“Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways, for, lo, there is not a word in my tongue but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.” No, but on that day—the day of the Lord—the day of judgment—what is always true will become, so to speak, visible, palpable, acknowledged—will inflict itself with a terrific and resistless force upon the reluctant senses and imaginations of men. “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations ; and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.” “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” “Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him ; and all the kindreds of the world shall wail because of Him.” “We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive for the things done in his body according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

“The day of the Lord.” They tell us nowadays that this is only the Christian form of the old pagan fable about Minos and Rhadamanthus. It were better to say that those pagan fables were broken rays of light spreading through the kingdom of darkness from one original truth—a truth which Christendom has since received in its fulness from the Father of Lights. The pagan fable about the judgment is related to Christ's revelation of the judgment, just as the pagan Olympus is related to the the Christian heaven—just as the dread of a future world of punishment which haunts the conscience and the literature of paganism through so many centuries is related to the Christian revelation of hell. On this side is the truth : on that is its mutilation or its caricature, or its dim presentiment amid the clouds and the darkness. But the original truth is not the less true because it is buried away here or there beneath the typical forms of pagan error. It is the human conscience, after all, taught by God's primitive revelation in nature, which in some distant age has so buried it ; and the Christian Church does but give clear, full expression to a certainty of which heathenism is always, more or less, mindful—the certainty that we men must be judged, when with St. Paul at Athens she

proclaims year after year, and century after century, that "God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

And the day of the Lord will come, we are told, as a thief in the night. What are the ideas which this comparison is meant, or calculated, to suggest to us?

"As a thief in the night." To most men this comparison will be suggestive, first of all, of fear. A thief enters a house at night under circumstances, and with an object, which create natural alarm. He knows what he wants. He is aided by the darkness. He is prepared to carry out his purpose. He has anticipated resistance. He has taken his measures. Even if he should meet a man upon the staircase, as resolute and as well prepared as himself—even if he should have in the end to make his escape without effecting his purpose—his coming of itself cannot but be regarded with much apprehension and disquiet. And the first class of feelings which must arise at the thought of the second coming of Christ must be of the same character. The old prophets Joel and Malachi, who, gazing over the horizons of some nearer judgments, described as yet afar off across the ages the coming day of universal doom—spoke of it as the great and terrible day of the Lord—spoke of it as the great and dreadful day. And we with the Gospel of mercy and salvation in our hands—we cannot but echo their language. We cannot but own that we, too, are afraid of God's judgments, to us more definitely revealed. Yes, it is certain, since the word of Christ is pledged thereto—it is certain that a day will come in which the fear of the Lord and the glory of His majesty will be brought before His creatures as never before. We shall witness that day, each one of us—the old and the young, the foolish and the wise, the saved and the lost. As surely as we have seen this morning's sunlight we shall hereafter behold the eternal Judge upon His throne, the countless multitudes before Him, the division between His creatures deep and irreversible, the disciplined activities of His angels, the issues on this side and on that, as all gradually settles down into the last unchangeable award. Great artists have dared to portray that day—in a past age, Michael Angelo—in this, Cornelius; but in presence of that scene the highest art is powerless. It must content itself at best with snatches of bliss and snatches of agony—with glimpses and fragments of a scene too vast, too sublime, too terrific to submit to the conditions of even the highest art. Scripture is always far in advance of anything that art can attempt on such a subject; and as we follow its disclosures we can but exclaim—

"Great God, what do I see and hear?
The end of things created!
The Judge of all men doth appear,
On clouds of glory seated.
The trumpet sounds, the graves restore
The dead which they contained before."

And then we add, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

But is this all? Surely, surely, not! The last word of the Gospel is not fear but love. It is not disquiet but peace. If we will, the Judge upon His throne may be our Friend and Saviour—the angels the ministers, not of His justice, but of His grace; and we ourselves, instead of calling on the mountains to cover us and on the rocks to fall on us, may be bold to look up to Him and to lift up our heads, conscious that at last our redemption draweth nigh. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect," even in that supreme moment? "It is God that justifieth them." "Who is He that condemneth them? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who also sitteth at the right hand of God where He ever liveth to make intercession for us." The question is, What are our relations to Him now—what our faith, our love, our repentance? It is in the spring that the autumn crops are sown. It is in youth that the fortunes of life are shaped. It is during the years of time that men decide how they will meet the judgment and that which follows it.

"As a thief in the night." Another truth which is suggested by the figure is the suddenness of the Advent. There is the contrast which it will present to many of God's judgments in this present life. They approach us with measured steps. We see them coming; we calculate the pace of their advance. We know almost to a moment when and how they will be upon us—when and how they will spend themselves; for they reach us through the world of nature or through the world of man, and the natural and human world lie open to our observations, and we know something of the laws that govern them. Take those three judgments which are not seldom put together in the Bible—war, famine, pestilence. Neither of these comes upon us altogether as a robber into the house at night. Before the war breaks out we see the causes which are increasingly likely to provoke it. Those which are permanent and in the nature of things—those which belong to the period—the antipathies of race, the aspirations or the wrongs of nations, the influence and bias of leading men, the pressure of circumstance, the drift of currents of popular feeling.

The cloud darkens gradually before it bursts—at least, so gradually that the exception seems to prove the rule. And so with famine. We observe in particular conditions of the atmosphere that which will produce a failure of the crops over a wide extent of fertile country. We know that this failure in the absence of sufficient communications by land or water will lead to famine in particular districts; and thus many months, at least, elapse after the first apprehensions of the coming trial before its pressure is actually felt. So it is, to a certain extent at least, even with pestilence—at any rate with a large number of fatal epidemic disorders. When the Asiatic cholera last visited this country, its gradual advance from city to city across Europe was noted just as if it had been a great personage on his travels, whose movements might be almost anticipated—who was said to be on his way to visit England. And we know that a hot season or

a great abundance of raw fruit, or bad sanitary arrangements in a crowded town, will bring fever in their train; and when the outbreak occurs it is impossible to say that it is unexpected. Neither war, nor famine, nor pestilence comes on man, generally speaking, like the thief in the night. But with the second coming of Jesus Christ it will be otherwise. There are, indeed, certain signs visible to the skilled sight of faith unobserved by those who walk by sight—signs which will precede the Advent—signs in the world of thought and in the world of nature—widespread intellectual confusion, political and social perplexity, material ruin—"signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations and perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear." Nay, as St. Paul says to the Thessalonians in his second letter, when they had understood his first words on the subject too narrowly, there will be a falling away from the Christian faith and the coming of one person who will embody all the hostilities towards God that are scattered throughout human nature and human history—the antichrist. No such person answering to the apostolic description would seem yet to have appeared though thoughtful and religious minds do recognise in the present circumstances of the world signs of his possible approach. But his appearance and all that follows him will be sudden enough, and he, we are told, will be consumed by the breath of the mouth of Christ and destroyed at the brightness of His coming. And thus, in reality, of that day and that hour knoweth no man, but the Father which is in heaven. We only know that it will come when men least expect it—that it will be the fullest justification of the proverb, "Nothing is probable except the unforeseen."

Are we looking out for it? To keep watch for that which is certain—which will come unexpectedly—which will affect us most intimately—is surely only common sense. We know how it is in ordinary life. I am thinking of a man who has been told that a relation may return any day from a distant colony, and raise questions in the law courts which will imperil his own right to his entire property. This man cannot help giving a great deal of thought to this expected rival. The mind reverts to the topic when he has nothing else to do. He looks morning by morning at the lists of ships which arrive or sail. He knows the main lines of packet by heart. He takes quite a new interest in the weather, in the telegraphic accounts of storms, in the accounts of recent voyages which other travellers have made. The whole subject is full of practical interest for him. His thoughts settle around it by a kind of mental gravitation which needs no outward exhortation or impulse to second its force. The second coming of our Lord and Saviour is much more certain than that of the colonist in question, who may be drowned or may die long ere he can touch the shores of England. But are we looking out for it? It may not come to us on this side of the grave: it will, practically, have come to us at death. At once certain and uncertain—certain as to its reality, uncertain as to its date—it bids us, at least, keep watch for it. A Christian's first practical anxiety should be expressed in his Master's words, "Lest coming suddenly He find me sleeping."

“As a thief in the night.” The figure suggests, lastly, that which cannot be prevented by any efforts of our own. The man whose house is broken into may resist the thief : he cannot ward off the attack by preventive measures. To do this he should be in the confidence of his assailant, whereas it is his assailant’s purpose to keep him in the dark. And here again there is a contrast between the second coming and those visitations which I have already noticed. In presence of the approach of war, of famine, of pestilence, man is very far from being powerless. Not merely can he do much to limit the range of these disasters : he can do much to prevent them. What is war ? War is the product of human misconduct—of human ambitions, human greed, human cruelty, human injustice. Let these be curbed—be cured—by the advancing Gospel, and wars will become first rare and then impossible ? What is famine ? Famine is, at least, not seldom, the consequence of want of foresight, of bad communications, of reckless administration, of wasteful expenditure. As these are corrected by the industry and resolution of mankind—I do not dare to say that famine will never occur—I do say that it will be in not a few cases prevented. What is pestilence ? Pestilence is constantly the product of bad air, bad drainage, bad food, close, fetid, unwholesome dwelling-houses. It may be checked—nay, often it may be arrested altogether—by that physical knowledge and skill which is so great a gift of God to this our modern world, by removing conditions that assist infection, by promptly confronting the very first symptoms of disease with its remedy or its antidote. But as against the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, how can man take any precautions whatever ? The causes which will determine that event lie as entirely beyond human control as do the movements of the planets. If we may observe, or think that we can observe, some of these causes, we can do nothing beyond observing them. We can, indeed, pray “Lord Jesus come quickly.” We can be “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,” as the Apostle bids us. But we cannot prevent if we would, for one moment, that which is inevitable. We can but prepare to meet it.

Are we doing this ? Brethren, we may prepare for the day of judgment by judging ourselves in self-examination. We may erect each one of us in his own heart a tribunal, and bid our acts, our words, our thoughts, our habits, our motives, our hopes, our fears, our passions, our shortcomings, our training of conscience and our respecting of conscience, our loyalty to duty and to principle, to relations, to dependents, to friends, to superiors, to pass before it. In those inmost recesses of being, in moments of entire sincerity with self, we may hear if we will the echoes of the voice of Christ in mercy, or in condemnation, as that voice will sound to us hereafter from the judgment throne. In view of the future which awaits us no moments of life are better spent than those which we spend in anticipating the verdict of the great Judge, in the solitude of our chambers, night by night before we go to rest.

And we may prepare for the day of judgment by devoting one day in the year, or in six months, or in each month, as may be possible, to

making in an especial way a business-like preparation for death. Death like judgment comes as a thief. Death is the king of terrors—often quite sudden, often quite unprepared for. Death is the antechamber, or the door of the antechamber of the judgment hall of Christ. As far as we are individually concerned our eternal state will have been already settled when we die. There may be after death, and before the general judgment, increase on light and peace to the departed faithful such as is hinted at when St. Paul makes the day of Christ alone the limit of the soul's progressive growth. The question whether we are saved or lost will have been fixed for ever when we die. And, therefore, to prepare for death is a man's true and most serious business during his life, and it is certain that no serious preparation will ever be made by those men who do not make a business of making it. One day from time to time snatched from the busiest life, devoted to self-examination—to prayer—to the review of old resolutions—to the formation of new resolutions—one day past entirely with Jesus Christ our crucified Redeemer, our future Judge, but now, if we will, our Helper and our Friend—one day in which that which perishes is set aside and the eye is fixed steadily, resolutely, on that which does not perish—that which lasts—one day when we think over one by one that company of souls whom we have known, perhaps loved, here below, and who have gone on, with what results we know not, though we may hope or guess much—who have gone on across those dark waters to the brink of which we are ever hastening—oh, depend upon it, to have a definite rule like this is light : it is hope : it is vigour : it is improvement. "Ye," says the Apostle to his Thessalonian friends—"Ye are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." God grant that it may be thus with us too ; but this must depend upon the use we make of what remains to us of time—it may be of the very few years, or months, or weeks, or days, or hours, that do still remain of it.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 9TH, 1877.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God,"—Rom. xiv. 12.

LAST Sunday we were considering this question—What is implied about the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the Apostle compares it to the inroad of a thief in the night? It was only by the way that we touched on its main purpose; that is to say, the final judgment of men. And the Advent season and the importance of the matter to each one of us equally warrant us in returning to it to-day. Now, all of us, I take it, must feel that, when St. Paul says that every man shall give account of himself to God, he makes one of the most solemn statements that are to be found even in his Epistles. He is led into making it, as we should say, quite incidentally. He wants to lay down a principle which will check the rash judgments which were common among Christians at Rome, in his day, respecting the common religious observances of their Christian neighbours. Some of the Roman Christians, it seems, were vegetarians: others ate anything that they fell in with. Some of them observed private family anniversaries: to others all days were pretty much alike. As yet the Church of Christ had not laid down any rule about these matters for Christians, and no individual Christian, therefore, might challenge another's liberty, or judge another's conduct. "Why," asks the Apostle, "dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Here is a solemn truth which must, we think, have at once lifted the thoughts of the Apostle's Roman readers above the little controversies in which they were engaged into a higher and a serener atmosphere. Whatever food they ate or did not eat,—whatever days they did or did not privately observe,—one thing was certain: they would have to give an account of this particular act or omission, as of everything else in their whole lives. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Here, then, we have, first of all, a broad statement affecting every one of us human beings who are here present,—a statement as to something which every human being has to do. Every one of us has to give an account. When this account is to be given,—where it is to be given?—how it is to be given?—these are questions, certainly, of the highest interest, but for the moment we are looking hard only at the general fact,—the accountability of man as man.

This is the aspect in which, for the time, man presents himself to the

Apostle. Man as man has a destiny before him of which one feature, at least, is certain,—that he has to give an account of himself. Certainly, human nature has many sides ; and other qualities, or endowments, or prerogatives, have seemed to observers to be man's distinguishing characteristic,—to one, the gift of reason, to another, the possession of free will, to a third, man's capacity for social progress, to a fourth, man's power of turning his thought back upon itself—in other words, his capacity for reflection. The Apostle looks out upon human nature,—upon the many men and women whom he sees passing before him in the streets of some Asiatic or Greek town, and he says to himself, "These are beings who, each one of them, have to give an account." Much else about them is solemn, interesting, attractive, but this one thing is more serious than all else ; they have, each one of them, before their destiny takes its final shape, to go through a scene of matchless importance in itself and in its issues. They have to make answer for themselves, to a Being Who knows all about them. They are—and if they do not already know it they will find themselves to be—responsible.

Responsibility. It is one of those great words which, if they are dwelt on, shape the thoughts, the wills, the lives of men. There are not many such words in any language—words which have this high privilege of representing the deepest and most fundamental truth that can sway the soul of man. "Responsibility," however, is one such word, and "duty," is another. But, of the two words, "responsibility" is the more solemn and the more powerful. My duty is that which, as a man, as a Christian, I have to do. My responsibility recalls the account which I must render for what I do and what I leave undone. Duty looks to the present,—responsibility to the present and to the future. Duty may seem at first to represent the more disinterested of the two ideas. Responsibility, human nature being what it is, is the more practically vigorous. Duty is a word which men may use—I will not here discuss how reasonably or otherwise—who have no exact answer to give to the question why duty is duty at all, or virtue is right, and vice is wrong, or industry, honesty, self-sacrifice are praiseworthy,—why sloth, deceit, self-indulgence, are blameworthy ; but responsibility is a word which no man would use thinkingly who has not a great deal to say upon these topics. A man who does not look beyond the grave may talk in a vague, though yet in a sincere way, about his duty, using that word with respect to what he has to do in his present position, and, perhaps, in order to keep it. But no man talks of responsibility in the true and wide sense of that term who does not know and feel that "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." "England," we know, "expects every man to do his duty," here and now. St. Paul says, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Not that a man need be a Christian in order to believe that he has to give an account of himself hereafter. The Mahometans, for instance, believe this as sincerely as we do ; and, if this is one of the fragments of truth which they have borrowed from the Christian Scriptures, it is probably retained by them because man's natural conscience bears such striking witness to its justice. It is impossible to believe in a moral Ruler of the world, and to believe that He has made His last—quite His last—reckoning with man on this side of the grave. There is too much of wronged innocence,—too much of unpunished wrong—to allow such a belief as this. The actual state of the world, if all ended here, would make belief in one perfectly good God all but impossible,—would force us, perhaps, to think either of a God who is force and intelligence, without being also goodness, or else of two beings—one of them good and the other evil—not unequally matched in

point of power, who have made the world of men the scene of their struggles for mastery, and that with very varying results. Whenever men have risen to belief in a moral God, they have necessarily also believed in some sort of future account on the ground that the area of operations afforded by human life in this earthly sphere, is, it would seem, too confined to enable a perfectly holy being satisfactorily to vindicate within its frontiers his essential attribute of justice.

And thus it is that we find the presentiment of judgment largely spread beyond the limits of the Church of God. Many of the better kind of heathen, from age to age, would have repeated thus far the creed of the Apostle. "We men are responsible agents. Every one of us shall give account of himself hereafter." Nay, its philosopher, Seneca, did say not merely that such an account was to be expected in reason, but that the thought of it was a great help to virtuous action. Who of us does not recognise the solemnity with which a man's life is forthwith invested when some one trial, or danger, or suffering is inevitable—is known to be inevitable by himself and by those who are in his company? This is the secret of the interest, always and everywhere renewed, with which a soldier is regarded when he is setting out for a campaign. We must, of late, have read public or private accounts of the profound emotion with which the troops parting to take their share in the great struggle now raging in the East have been regarded by their countrymen, and the reason is that, however much the men who compose a regiment or a battalion may differ from each other in countenance, in antecedents, in bearing, in other claims to interest, this is certain about all and each of them—that they will have at no distant hour to encounter the shock of battle with all its tragic liabilities. That one clearly ascertained point of their impending destiny is the true secret of the interest with which they are regarded. And we must have been conscious of the same kind of feeling if by any chance we have ever had to visit a person who is under sentence of death. Whatever he may have been, or whatever he may be, all else is dwarfed in our minds by the thought of the stern penalty which shortly awaits him at a fixed hour in a fixed place at the hand of the law. And yet, if we would look at things as they are, there is every reason for extending this special kind of interest to every single member of our race. Whatever else may be uncertain respecting the future of us—each and all of us who are here assembled in this cathedral—it is certain that one and all of us will die, and after death must give an account. Of all who ever lived on this earth, of all whom we have seen in life, it may be only once, of all who will live till the end comes, of all of whom we have only heard the names, of those nearest and dearest to us, and of those most remote, whether, in age, or station, or character, or occupation, this one fact is equally true, and it invests every one of their lives with an equal solemnity, that they will give an account hereafter.

Every one of us, then, will give an account; every one of us is responsible. But responsible for what? What is it respecting which we have to give this account? The Apostle answers by saying, "Every one of us shall give account of, or concerning, himself." What is the ground of this particular responsibility? Why is a man thus responsible for himself? Why shall we each one of us have to give an account of that which we do, and that which we leave undone; of that which we are, and of that which we are not, but might be, and should be; of that which we believe, and of that which we do not believe, but, it may be, he knows, could, and should believe; of the motives which really sway us, of the passions which most powerfully affect us, and of the influences which we exert on those around us, and which they in turn exert upon us; of the

drift and current of our lives as they lie beneath the eye which surveys them perfectly from first to last, without prejudice, without passion, searchingly, unerringly? The answer is, because all this is for us, more or less directly, a matter of choice. Our acts, our omissions to act, our moral character, our moral deficiencies, our faith, our failure to believe, our ruling motives, our ruling passions, our relations, active and passive, towards the beings around us, the course of our existence, whether it be upward or downward, are all of them the result of choice—acts of choice carrying with them, more or less completely, the whole impetus of our being—acts of choice extending, it may be, over some scores of years. Millions upon millions of these acts of choice determining in a particular direction the general movements of our wills have made us what we are now—have determined what we do now, what we now omit to do, what we believe and what we reject now, what on the whole we are tending to, what we leave more and more behind us. Doubtless, this is not the whole account of the matter. Each of us starts with a natural outfit, which helps to a good choice, or which makes it difficult. Then, again, the opportunities of our several lives differ almost indefinitely, and, as we Christians believe, the grace of baptism and the assistance of the Holy Spirit given again and again in after-life, though it does not act irresistibly and force a man up to heaven against his will, yet is a great force on the right side. But, allowing for all this, we are in the main, and we shall be still more when we come to die, what we have made ourselves.

And it is on this ground that we are responsible. Responsibility goes hand in hand with power—with power of choice. No man is responsible for the size of his body, or for the colour of his hair, or for the number of his brothers and sisters. These things are out of his power. His responsibility begins exactly where his power of choice begins. It varies with that power, and upon the use he makes of it will depend the kind of account which, sooner or later, he will have to give.

It will be most assuredly of ourselves that we shall have to give an account. It would not be difficult for many of us to give an account, more or less exhaustive, of other people. We spend our time in thinking them over—talking them over—discussing them. We know, it may be, some true things about them. We suspect a great deal which is not true, which is utterly false. To some of us, it may be, this discussion of others presents itself as at once an amusement and a relief. It is an amusement, for it costs us nothing to dwell on their failings, and human nature, when we have no immediate stake in it, is always amusing. And it is a relief. To talk about others keeps us at the circumference of our life, far—very far—away from the centre. We dread being near the centre. We do not wish to be there with ourselves—within ourselves—alone with ourselves. There are wounds beneath the surface which we would not—which we dare not—probe. There are memories from which we fly, if we can manage it, to a something outside and beyond them. And yet, after all, it is of ourselves that we shall have to give an account. Others will come into that account only so far as they depend on us—so far as we may have injured, or wronged, or otherwise affected them. They may now take the place in thought which ought to be given to our own condition. A day will come when this will be impracticable. We shall be isolated—alone—before the eternal Judge; and, though amidst the countless multitudes, He will deal with each one of us as though we alone existed before Him—as though all the rays of His infinite wisdom and justice were concentrated on our particular case. It is then of ourselves that we must each one of us give account.

But to whom is this account to be given? "Every one of us," says the Apostle, "shall give an account of himself to God." It stands to reason, my brethren, that an account must be given, if given at all, to some person. Responsibility implies a person to whom the responsible man is responsible. There is no such thing as responsibility, except in the language of poetry and metaphor, to an idea—to an abstraction—to a sort of fancy in the air. A responsible man, I repeat it, is always responsible to some person—whether one or more persons—whether to a human or to a superhuman person. All human society is based on, and it is kept together by, this law of responsibility to persons. We all know that servants are responsible to their masters, and children to their parents and teachers, and soldiers to their commanding-officers, and the clerks in a great business house to the partners, and those who are dependent on others to those on whom they depend. Not that responsibility to persons is confined only to the young, or the employed, or the subordinate, or the dependent; not that responsibility is found only at the base of society. On the contrary, the higher you mount the greater the responsibility, because, as we have already seen, responsibility implies power—power of choice, and varies with power, so that where there is most power there is most responsibility. In reality, masters are more responsible than servants, and parents than children, and officers than the soldiers whom they command, and the heads of a great firm than the clerks in their employment, and employers and superiors generally than those whom they employ and who depend on them.

But to whom do these highly-placed people, more responsible because invested with more power—to whom do they owe their debt of responsibility? Well, in some cases we can still follow the subject upwards from one superior to another, from one depositary of responsibility to a greater, till we reach the summit. But to whom is the highest of all—the king—the head of the government—responsible? In what are called absolute monarchies he is, practically, responsible only to God. And if you could be certain of always having for a monarch a man of great wisdom and of entire integrity of purpose, perhaps this would be the simplest, the most useful, the most beneficent form of government; but as you cannot be certain of this, or rather, to speak plainly, can only secure it very rarely indeed, it has happened that in most civilised countries government itself is made ultimately responsible to the common judgment of those whom it governs,—responsible to the people. This has been the principle of the English constitution for nearly two centuries, and it illustrates the law on which society is based—that every man is responsible to some other man.

Responsibility, then, is the law of human society, and yet there are always certain members of society who seem to be, somehow, responsible to no one. Wealthy people with no relations, and who, as they say, can do what they like with their money—idle people with no duties or engagements, who have, as they phrase it, "to kill time"—clever writers, or speakers, with no clear sense of truth or duty, who think that they may write or say just what occurs to them without let or hindrance—if these men are really responsible to whom are they responsible? So far as this world is concerned they seem at first sight to go through it without having to answer to anybody. If we could consider these cases in detail we should, I think, find that the absence of any human person to whom responsibility is due is apparent only, and is not real. But be that as it may, most assuredly there is one Being to Whom all must give an account of themselves sooner or later—both those who have to give an account to their fellow-men, and those who seem in this life to escape all

real responsibility whatever. One such Being, I say, there is, to Whom we all of us are responsible—the holy and eternal God. Our responsibility to Him rests on a strict basis of right. We answer to Him for the use we have or have not made of the powers and faculties which He has given us, and because they are His gifts. It is, as the Maker of all things, that He is the Judge of all men. The parable of the talents is the key to this aspect of human life. Whatever we possess comes from Him, and He expects it to be accounted for. All those persons to whom men are here responsible are shadows of His supreme authority—the parent, the teacher, the master, the magistrate, the monarch—nay, in its collective sense, the people. Behind each of these authorities, partial and transient, He stands—He the real, the everlasting Judge of man, —to Whom in the last resort all His responsible creatures must give in their account.

There is often something painfully artificial in the relation which in this life makes this man answerable for his conduct to that man,—St. Paul, for instance, to Felix, or Seneca to Nero. The relation may have grown up out of a state of things now obsolete. It may be altogether at issue with the relative worth of the two men. But of this artificiality there is no trace whatever in the relation of responsibility in which every soul stands towards the eternal God. All are equally indebted to Him: all are equally dependent upon Him. His claims upon all—His rights over all—are equally absolute. And before Him, the Almighty and the All-holy, each and all of the children of men are but as vanity. "The children of men are deceitful upon the weights: they are altogether lighter than vanity itself."

Every man must give an account of himself to God. And when we think of what God is we see something of what this account perforce must be. It will not be measured out by us to Him, by or according to the standard of our fears, or our sensitiveness, or our bad memories, or our dulness of conscience, or our false and artificial views of truth and of duty. True, we shall give it, and yet He will receive or He will exact it in utter independence of us. He will read us off as being what we are—as being what already He knows us to be. All the veils which hide us from each other—which hide us from ourselves—will drop away before the glance of His eye. Even now there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight, for "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do." Even now what we owe each of us to God—what graces He has given us—what dangers and sufferings He has spared us—He knows, and as yet, He only knows; but when we come to give in our account we shall know too. A flood of light will be poured from His throne across the whole course of our separate lives, and into every crevice of our souls and characters. Whatever His verdict upon us may be, our conscience will have to affirm its justice. We shall see ourselves by His light as He sees us—as we perhaps have never seen ourselves before. We shall know what He meant us to be—what we might have been—what we are—as never before. All the illusions of our present life—all the fabrics of self-satisfaction built up by the kind words of friends—by the insincerities of flatterers—by all the atmosphere of twilight which encompasses our spiritual state here—all these will have rolled away. We shall stand out in the light before the judge—before ourselves. It may be that we have clung to some hope that we have lived on unobserved by Him—that we are beyond the eyesight of the Being of beings. It will be impossible to think this in the day of account. They say, "Tush, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." "Take heed, ye unwise among the people. O ye fools, when will ye understand? He that planted the ear, shall He not

hear? Or He that hath made the eye, shall He not see? Or He that nutureth the heathen—it is He that teacheth man knowledge: shall not He punish?" It has been said that the strongest of all the motives that can change a man's life, both within and without, for his lasting good, is the love of God. If we could love God quite sincerely for twenty-four hours, we should be other men,—capable, spiritually speaking, almost of anything. But if this be so, the next motive in the order of efficiency is, beyond all doubt, the remembrance of the inevitable last account which we must each of us give before the judgment seat of Christ. If we could only let that truth sink into our hearts and take possession of them—if, as we presently leave this cathedral, instead of saying to each other, "What did you think of the anthem?" or "What of the sermon?" we could be silent and make up our minds to live henceforth as men who will bear in their thoughts day by day the remembrance that they have to be judged by a holy God, we should find that that resolution would do three things for us.

First of all, it would act as a check upon us. It may be that, until now, we have gone through life like grown up schoolboys, saying, doing, just what we like, with no thought beyond each act, each word. It may be that we pride ourselves on being untrammelled by creeds, by scruples—on being, as we put it, "unconventional"—on understanding life chiefly as freedom—freedom to think, to say, to do what we like without let or hindrance. So we bound along the path of earthly existence in our boisterous irrepressible spirits as if along that path no mistakes could possibly be made by any high-spirited traveller—as if that path led in the end to no place in particular; or we bound along as if engaged in a continuous frolic—as if existence were an immense inexhaustible joke from beginning to end. And thus we pass from boyhood to manhood, and from ripe manhood to its decline, as if we had eyes, and ears, and thought, and imagination, and sympathy, ready for almost anything in the world except the one question, "What is to be the end of it?" And here it is that the thought of the future account does sometimes act as a sudden solemn check, not merely upon gross sin, but upon aimlessness, frivolity, lack of serious purpose in act and word. A voice comes to us in the dead of the night, or in some moment of enforced solitude, and it whispers, "This is all very well, but you have to give an account to God." So of old, said the preacher, the son of David in Jerusalem, "Truly, the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness. Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." So said the beloved Apostle in his island prison. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books according to their works." And if, when a man gets up in the morning, he would say to himself solemnly, "I shall have one day certainly to account for what I do, and say, and think this day," and if, ere he lays him down at night, he would say to himself solemnly, out aloud, if necessary, "I shall have to account before God for what I have done, and said, and thought, and failed to think, and say, and do, this day," he would find at the end of six months the truth of that saying of St. Augustine, "Nothing has contributed more powerfully to wean me from all that held me down to earth than the thought constantly dwelt on of death and of the last account."

And this resolution to give thought to the last account would prove, secondly, a useful stimulus. If some men seem to regard life as a playground, others treat it as a sleeping-room. They use it with all its vast opportunities as a something that is only to be dozed away. They shrink from its demands on their exertions—from the repeated calls to do something for God's glory—something for the benefit of others—something for true self-improvement, as if these invitations were merely the importunate voice of an undeserving beggar or the ravings of a fanatic. They are indolent at twenty. They say that when they are thirty they will be active men—men of prayer, men of work, men of resolution and sacrifice ; but thirty comes and finds them, if I may say so, still in bed, with just those companions around them who assure them that they will be in time to make a fair use of life if they are up and doing at forty. The years soon pass, and forty is upon them, and still they are where and what they were. They are still alive to the necessity of some effort, but a man, so they say, is not old at forty, and, meanwhile, "a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep ;" and so they reach fifty or sixty, when youth has fairly passed and habit has stiffened around them, and it is too late to rise. If anything can save them, surely it is the overwhelming thought of the account which they must give—the account of all that they have received—strength, intellect, it may be, income, time, friends, God's grace, good thoughts and impulses, bright visions of usefulness and happiness, repeated discontent with self, only to be wasted—only to be thrown aside as if they had never been received at all. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"—the light of His wisdom streaming from the words that are written in His Gospel shining on thy soul—the light of His love shining from the cross on which He died for thee—the light of His justice as, to the anticipations of faith, He appears in the clouds of heaven coming to judge the quick and the dead. This may yet save thee ere it be too late.

And, lastly, a use of thinking much of the last account is that, like the old Jewish law, this thought is a schoolmaster to bring the soul to the feet of Jesus Christ, for the thought of that account does force us to think over our lives here, not once or twice, but often ; not superficially, but with a determination, if possible, to see ourselves as we are. To think of ourselves thus, often, is to anticipate its result as far as we are concerned. It is to act on Paul's advice that, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. And when we do this, what do we find but weakness, perverseness, determination to go wrong, indifference to God's leading, all that can warrant the acknowledgment, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing, for the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not ?" This is about the best that many of us can honestly say for ourselves, and so we are driven to Jesus Christ our Lord for pardon and for strength, just as were the Jews and Gentiles in the first age of the Church. His blood washes out the stains which else had forfeited acceptance at the last. With Him there is still plenteous redemption. His Spirit and His sacraments convey the strength which make future obedience possible. We can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us ; and so, with His cross before our eyes, with His gracious presence and blessing within our souls, we look forward to our account with trembling joy. It had been impossible—quite impossible—to stand before His throne unbefriended and alone ; but He in His generous love has delivered us, if we will, from our strongest enemy, and has covered us already with His robe of righteousness.

“A VERY SMALL THING.”

A Sermon

By the Rev. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 16TH, 1877.

“With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment.”—
1 COR. iv. 3.

THE subject which has engaged our attention on the first two Sundays in Advent is the account which we must, each one of us, render when Jesus Christ our Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead. And this, naturally, leads us to think of those judgments about ourselves which are formed here and now by our fellow creatures, and of the kind of deference which is due to them. And St. Paul meets us very opportunely in the Epistle of to-day, and tells us how he treated those Corinthian Christians who passed judgment upon his character for faithfulness as an Apostle of Christ. St. Paul wished to be thought what he was—Christ's Apostle, a minister sent by Him and devoted to Him, a steward entrusted with the treasures of His mysteries whether of truth or grace. “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” But office is not everything in an Apostle. Besides and beyond office there is character; there is motive. “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” St. Paul knew that there were many persons in Corinth and elsewhere who denied his apostolical office altogether, because, forsooth, he had not been taught and sent by our Lord Himself during His earthly life, as had been the case with the twelve. St. Paul was far from being indifferent as to whether men thought rightly or wrongly about his apostolical credentials, since the question of their genuineness was not a private and personal matter, but a matter of high public interest affecting the spiritual condition of all those to whom he had to minister. St. Paul, therefore, took a great deal of pains to convince

those Galatians who denied his apostolic authority, that he was a true Apostle in the same sense as the twelve. But he is here thinking of men who denied not the reality of his office, but his faithfulness to its obligations; and, with regard to these men he says, not, "Let a man account of us as faithful," but, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." In short, as to what men thought of his personal character—of his general purpose and ruling motives—he professes his entire indifference. Whether in this respect they approved of him or not, was, he thought, a very small thing.

Here let us observe, first of all, that the judgment of our fellow creatures upon our acts and our characters is, practically speaking, an inevitable accompaniment of human life. For many a century, long before Christianity was in the world, writers on human nature pointed out that such judgments are, on many accounts, untrustworthy—that they are, generally, one-sided, defective, partial, tainted with injustice—that they cannot, from the nature of the case, fail, upon the whole, to do more harm to the judge than to the object of his criticism. We see in the Psalter how many and how mistaken were such judgments in the days of ancient Israel. David is constantly appealing to the just judgment of God against the judgments of Saul, of Doeg, of Ahithophel, of Absalom. Ezra pours out his complaint to God, in the 119th Psalm, again and again of the false judgments of the surrounding heathen, probably in Babylon. And when our Lord came He said, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged;" and St. Paul interprets this in the precept, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." But, as a matter of fact, men go on judging—judging incessantly, judging implacably—just as before. The ceaseless activities of the human mind—of each human mind—are employed on the human lives and actions around it, as the highest and nearest and most engaging subject of interest in this world of sense; and the result is a continuous series of judgments or estimates varying in correctness, in authority, in direction, but being constantly formed, produced, proclaimed. The family circle, the society of a street or of a small town, the county paper, the leading newspaper of a great country, are all of them occupied with the production of these judgments. There is, indeed, a great difference between the gossip of a small circle and the stately periods of a leading article, but the moral result may be, essentially, the same. That men will go on judging each other must be taken for granted, and the question is, how is a Christian to bear himself with reference to these judgments—to this surrounding atmosphere of perpetual criticism? Here, at any rate, St. Paul speaks for himself in reference to one small group of critics: "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

"A very small thing." We should be doing the Apostle a great injustice if we supposed him to be slighting the opinion of his fellow men on all questions of conduct. Any such indiscriminate depreciation of human judgments, as if they were always and necessarily worthless, is foreign to the sympathetic spirit—is opposed to the recorded conduct and language of the great Apostle. St. Paul knew that human opinion has a work to do in God's providential government of the world. It acts in the world of thought and conduct as does the policeman in the streets: it is there to keep outward order. It represses—it frowns down—all that falls below—all that outreaches—that low conventional standard of conduct upon which a mixed society can be so far agreed as to resolve to uphold it. It is apt to entrench itself for the sake of convenience in the sayings of its representative authors; and thus St. Paul appeals to it when he

quotes Aratus to the Athenians, or Epimenides about the Cretans ; and, when he quotes Menander to the Corinthians, he implies among them the existence of a public opinion higher than the moral level of his quotation. To this public opinion, in the shape of a free, natural sentiment, he appeals even when he is regulating such a trifle as the head-dress of the Corinthian women. And because his standard of conduct is so far from being wholly bad that it is in some ways entitled to very great respect, he bids Christians take heed to have a good report with them that are without the Church. In all lawful matters they were to stand well in the opinion of their Jewish or their pagan neighbours. And the reason for all this is found in a still deeper feature of his teaching. St. Paul not only recognises—he insists on—that which gives to all human opinion a certain value, namely, the truth which is given originally to man as a part of his natural outfit—just as much a part of it as his imagination or his memory—that deposit of elementary truths which the Almighty Creator has lodged in the depths of every human soul. Such a truth is the universal belief in a distinction between right and wrong, whatever right and wrong may turn out to include in detail. Such is the universal apprehension that wrong doing must be followed by punishment. Such is the general presentiment of a life prolonged indefinitely, whether for good or for evil, after death. Such is the immemorial supposition, to use the words of a great heathen, that there is a supreme Being—the Author of this distinction between right and wrong—the Author of the law that wrong is followed by punishment, as well as the Author of nature. "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even God's eternal power and Divinity." This original deposit of truth may be frittered away by moral levity, by sin, as it was so generally in the heathen world, which when it knew God glorified Him not as God. But enough of it remains to secure to human opinion a certain element, if not a basis, of truth, however this may be overlaid by error. That which remains to man of this original deposit in man's fallen state, may be but the ruins of a once stately edifice ; but there are ruins which have before now suggested new and beautiful creations even in their last stages of decay.

And still more respect must attach in the Apostle's mind to the opinion and judgment of Christians ; and he is in the text writing to Christians at Corinth, for Christians have been illuminated by a higher truth than that which can be derived from nature. The day-star from on high has visited them. They have, as another Apostle puts it, an unction from the Holy One. They know—or they may if they will, know—all things that are best worth knowing. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," has endowed their consciences with a new set of principles. The Sermon on the Mount has replaced, without contradicting, the earlier lessons of nature and of conscience ; and St. Paul, accordingly, hears Christ speaking in the Christian, because the principles deposited in the Christian conscience are essential parts of the mind of Christ, and the language which they inspire is, within limits, His language. No doubt a great deal else may determine the language of Christians from time to time. Christians are men ; Christians are sinners ; but the remembrance that the light of heaven has been poured on them makes it impossible to treat the general judgment of Christians with disrespect. Again and again the arguments in St. Paul's writings are intended to throw his readers back upon the great body of truth of which they are already in possession—upon the inward illumination which

they already enjoy ; and it is impossible to suppose that He would have always treated the judgment of such readers with disrespect as “a very small thing.”

Bearing this in mind we can arrive at some conclusions as to the true province of human judgments.

They keep order, as I have already said, in the world of thought, and in the world of conduct—a certain sort of order at any rate. They do not, for instance, go far wrong when they are brought face to face with a great public crime, which, as being such, is patent, whether to the natural or to Christian conscience. Take, for instance, such crimes as the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or the massacre in Glencoe. At the present day no writer of character, of any persuasion, or in any country, would venture to defend these acts. The world has looked hard on them for three or for two centuries, and history has spoken. All that can be attempted now is an apology for the partial misunderstandings—for the mismanaged motives—of some who have countenanced them. As to the facts themselves there is no room for discussion. By the light of the natural conscience of man—by the light of the principles of the Gospel of Christ—they are condemned irrevocably. What man—what Christian—can doubt that this condemnation, thus uttered on earth, is a prelude to that which will be heard from Heaven ?

Again, the common judgment of man does not err when it pronounces upon the more personal acts of an individual, supposing them to be well attested. David's adultery, and his murder of Uriah, would be no less condemned by man's natural conscience than it is condemned in David's own language of inspired penitence. The betrayal of our Lord by Judas Iscariot is an act upon the character of which all men can pronounce a judgment. Even those who do not share the Christian's faith in Christ's eternal Godhead must see that such treachery towards so gracious, so beneficent a Master, had about it a peculiar character of malignity. In St. Paul's day a man need not be born a Christian to condemn Nero's murder of his brother Britannicus. And, notwithstanding his personal popularity as a monarch, the treatment of his wives by our own king Henry the Eighth, has been long since branded by the conscience of Christendom with a note of infamy. How deliberate, how irrevocable, these judgments are—how they attach themselves to a name, and make it permanently infamous in history—is seen by the futility of the attempts which are made from time to time to reverse them. An ingenious writer of the last generation tried to show that Judas was not so bad after all. A popular historian of our own day has attempted an apology for Henry the Eighth, on the ground that it was necessary to provide, somehow, for the succession to the English throne. The conscience of man listens for a moment to these ingenious audacities. It listens : perhaps it is indignant : perhaps it smiles : it passes on : it forgets them.

Once more, the judgment of man ventures at times a step farther—to pronounce with reserves upon character. If Scripture had not said that Jeroboam, Ahab, and Jehu were bad men, we know enough, from what it tells us about them, to anticipate its judgment. Their acts are such as to betray, or rather as to stamp, character. There are cases in which so many circumstances combine to create and ratify a moral impression, that no conclusion but one seems possible. On the other hand, if Scripture had not pointed the way,—if it had not led us to see the fundamental levity and irreverence of Saul, would it have been easy for us to condemn him in the language in which Scripture condemns him ? Might we not have reserved for him some of the sympathy which we now give unre-

servedly to his successor? And who shall attempt to pronounce decisively upon the mixed characters that make up the greater part of history, whether Christian or heathen—upon Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, yet the murderer of his son; upon Charlemagne, that strange compound of incompatible elements of moral earnestness and crime; upon Mahomet, in his early life, it might seem, the sincere enthusiast in a crusade against idolatry, and afterwards the deliberate trickster; upon Cromwell, in whom much that is best and much that is worst in human nature are so subtly mingled? Who shall pronounce in numberless cases, equally or more difficult, except with hesitations and qualifications so marked as to deprive the judgment of any critical value? The truth is that, in estimating character, the judgment of men can be only certain in rare cases, and—what is of great importance—seldom or never during the lifetime of the person judged. As the old Greek poet, Pindar, sings, "In these things the coming days are the wisest witnesses. In order to estimate character, you require time; you require distance. You cannot measure a hill while you are standing at its base, or climbing up the side of it. You must move to a distance, and see how it looks on the horizon, and against the sky; and thus it is that, in respect of the characters of the great majority of those who have filled a foremost place in history, men are constantly reviewing the verdicts at which they have arrived—constantly modifying, supplementing, retracting, explaining, the rehabilitating those who have been condemned, and condemning those who have been unduly praised. And all this shows how uncertain such judgments really are—how tentative, how partial, how liable to be reversed by a higher judgment that will be pronounced hereafter.

And this may enable us to understand why St. Paul, who does such justice to human public opinion, in its own proper sphere, is so indifferent to its conclusions, whether at Corinth or elsewhere, respecting himself. He has more reasons than one for treating those conclusions as a very small thing.

First, the Corinthian judgment about him was like a portrait-painter's sketch at a first sitting. The Corinthians had not yet had time to learn what a longer acquaintance might have taught them. Much less had they had time or opportunity for arriving at the absolute truth of the matter. Secondly, this Corinthian estimate of St. Paul was a strangely biased one. The Corinthians were largely influenced by some teachers who wished to bring into the Church as much as they could of the old Jewish law, and who were opposed to the Apostle because he would not allow this. They looked with jaundiced eyes at all that he did. They had made up their minds beforehand that he could not be faithful. No Pelagian would have given St. Augustine a good character. No Puritan would have spoken well of Archbishop Laud. A member of the Jacobin Club, in Paris, would not have done justice to Louis the Sixteenth. History could hardly leave Sir Robert Peel in the hands of the Protectionists. And on the same principle St. Paul was prejudged by the Judaizers at Corinth. What they called a judgment was, in reality, a formulated prejudice. And, thirdly, the Corinthians were passing judgment on a point which they had no real means of investigating. They could decide whether he was or was not a true Apostle, by examining the sources and the nature of the apostolic authority, on the one hand, and the events of St. Paul's life on the other. But how could they decide whether he was or was not a faithful steward of God's mysteries—faithful in intention as well as faithful in act? Single acts, which his Corinthian critics might deem unfaithful, did not show, even in their estimate, that his life, as a whole,

was an unfaithful life. The question really belonged to the inner region of motive, and motive is under the eye and jurisdiction of God. What could the Corinthians know about Paul's motives? They could only scan the surface of his life. They might—they did, some of them—call him a deceiver. He knew in the Most Holy of all Presences that he was true. And, fourthly, St. Paul did not, therefore, feel or affect indifference to the question whether he was or was not faithful. He wished the question to be tried before a competent tribunal, just as in matters of earthly law he appealed from the biased sympathies—from the petty jurisdiction—of a provincial magistrate. "I stand at Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged." So in matters of the soul he would go straight to the Fountain of absolute justice. "He that judgeth me is the Lord." The knowledge that that judgment was going on day by day—the knowledge that it would be proclaimed from heaven hereafter—relieved him of all anxiety whatever as to the opinion which might be pronounced about him at Corinth. "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

And what would Paul have said about the judgments as to the characters of religious men which are being so continually pronounced by a public opinion such as that of our modern world? The very force and empire of this public opinion, arising, as it does, from the fact that all classes of characters contribute to form it—not only the thoughtful, but the inexperienced—not only the servants of Christ, but those who do not serve Him, and who, secretly or avowedly, reject His claims—is fatal to its efficiency as a guide in forming any true religious judgment whatever. It is no disparagement to a broom to say that it is not adapted to clean an oil painting. It has its own function—that of cleaning a wall or a passage. It discharges this much more efficiently than would be the case if it were only a painting brush. This merit lies not in the delicacy of its touch, but in its rough aggressive force, and this, in its way, is a very real merit; but when we see the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and the sanctities of the Christian life discussed, as they are discussed now-a-days, in our leading organs of opinion, it is scarcely impossible to avoid feeling as a Royal Academician might be conceived to feel if a body of well-disposed and earnest persons armed with brooms were to burst into our National Gallery with a view to touch up the Raphaels and the Turners. The best intentions will not enable a rough instrument to do work for which it is, necessarily, unfitted; and public opinion, by reason of its massive grandeur and its force, is unfitted to deal with the secrets of the kingdom of heaven—with the sanctities and the exigencies of the conscience of man. As the Apostle says of the natural man, "It cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned." It has an eye for material grandeur, for political grandeur, for social grandeur, for intellectual grandeur, but it either does not recognise moral and spiritual grandeur, or it recognises it only to feel a certain secret discomfort and aversion. Certainly a public opinion which should have combined the petty sectarianisms of Corinth with the proud indifference to religious and moral considerations which prevailed in the imperial court of Rome, would not have commanded the homage of St. Paul. It would have appeared to him a very small thing had he been judged, however severely, by such a tribunal.

"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." My brethren, two kinds of people may use that language.

A very bad man may use it—a man who has steeled himself against all

that is good in public opinion—a man who has, to use the Apostle's metaphor, burnt out the sensitive nerve of his conscience, and has secured the dreadful relief which comes with moral insensibility. And a saint like Paul may use that language, for he is hidden privily in God's own presence from the provoking of all men. He is kept secretly in his tabernacle from the strife of tongues. As the Babel of criticism rises around him, he looks upwards to the one Being Whose judgment he values. "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God." Most of us are between the two. And St. Paul says, "It is a very small thing what people say of me." We cannot, if we are sincere, profess wholly and at once to follow Him. We know that, strictly speaking, what people say of us is not a small thing to us, but, on the contrary, an important thing. We care a great deal about what they say. If they praise us we are relieved—gratified. If they are silent we are anxious. If they abuse and denounce us we are wretched. We do not pretend to be indifferent to what they say. If we are important people, as the world counts it, it may be we get paragraphs in the newspapers constructed in our honour. If we are unimportant we get our friends to take our part in the little circle in which we move. And our sensitiveness proves a great deal. It shows, first, that we do not really refer ourselves to God, and, secondly, that we feel that a discriminating human criticism might have some hard things to say of us. Eli was not indifferent to the words of Samuel, boy as Samuel was. Eli's conscience told him that they were true words. Nero was not indifferent when his dormant natural conscience was waking in the agony at the near prospect of his disgrace and his death. As in the early morning he fled disguised from Rome, he was not indifferent to the curses which he heard upon his name from the soldiers in the Prætorian camp. He knew that they were deserved. Conscience, it has been said, makes cowards of us all. Yes, it does, when we have left it to take care of itself. It need not do so for any man who has used his opportunities of making peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, for the language of St. Paul may become—increasingly become—the language of every Christian who lives in the thought of the day of judgment, and is preparing, through Christ's grace and mercy, to meet it. Human judgments are not scorned—they are overlooked—they are forgotten—by men who have set their eyes upon the Divine judgment. In the world of moral estimates, as in the natural heavens, the stars vanish from sight at the rising of the sun. We listen to the din of human voices, to the wisdom, to the folly, to the inconsistencies, to the ever-changing notes of human opinion about men of the day, about our friends, about ourselves. And then the old Psalmist meets us with his descriptive prediction, "The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken and called the world from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof. Out of Zion hath God appeared: in perfect beauty. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. There shall go before Him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about Him. He shall call the heaven from above, and the earth that He may judge His people." That is the true final court of appeal, which will be opened when Jesus, our Divine Lord, appears on the clouds of heaven, coming to judgment. That will be the day of astonishing reversals of earthly judgments, when in a thousand ways, beyond the powers of our imagination to conceive, "the first shall be last, and the last first." In the thought of that day all our human judgments, bad and good, private and public, confident and hesitating, erroneous and true, dwindle down into their proper insignificance.

“A VERY SMALL THING.”

nificance. In the thought of that day we learn, more and more clearly, that one thing is, beyond all others, worth living for—the pardon and approving verdict of the Eternal Judge, and that that verdict is, on the whole, best secured if while here, in this brief day of life, we turn a deaf ear to the voices of men, and unite ourselves more and more closely to Him Who, in life and in death, is our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

CHRIST'S COMING WELCOMED BY THE REDEEMED.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 23RD, 1877.

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us."—ISA. xxv. 9.

SOME of us may remember in the old days, when railroads were as yet unknown, or only partially in use, the sort of approach which the traveller used to make to an old continental town. His road lay along a straight, broad, highly raised causeway, fringed on either side by tall poplar trees planted at equal distances from each other. He had to drive, perhaps, some three or four miles through this avenue, and at the further extremity he could from the first perceive the spires or turrets of the place at which he would halt. If there was a variety in the persons he met, and in the objects which he could just make out between or beyond the trees, there was persistent monotony in his general purpose, and consequently in the direction of his thought. From the moment that he enters the avenue he is thinking of his arrival at the other end of it—of what he will see, and say, and do when he dismounts—of the quarters, the welcome, the persons, the objects of interest which there await him. All else that he sees is preparatory and subordinate to that final moment which is, for the present, the limit of his efforts and his expectations.

Now, this may suggest the purpose of a long preparatory season, which leads us up week by week, with much variety of incidental suggestion, with steady unity of general aim, to a great festival of the Church. Advent is the long, straight avenue which we entered now some three

weeks ago. From the first day of Advent, and on each succeeding day, the Christmas festival has been in view. Certainly at first our attention was divided between this subject and Christ's second awful coming; but already in the collect for Advent Sunday the visit of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to this, our world, in great humility, is mentioned before His coming again in His glorious majesty to judge the quick and the dead; but how to prepare for Christ's birthday as Christians should, what to do on it, what to hope from it, what to feel on it, what to be on it when we reach it—to decide this has been the business of Advent, and as the brief days have passed one after another, like the trees on either side in the avenue, we have been drawing nearer and nearer to that bright day for which Advent should have prepared us, and that day is already close at hand.

And certainly here, my brethren, the prophet Isaiah helps us to anticipate the Christmas festival by putting into our mouths and hearts the greeting which we should offer to its Lord. Isaiah is here, as he is so often, the prophet not merely of future events, but of future states of mind and feeling—not merely of God's dealings with His people, but of the way in which His people would or should meet their God.

Now, to what day—to what event—does Isaiah here refer? He is thinking, first of all, of Hezekiah's victory over the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. It was no ordinary day which saw the discomfiture of the Assyrian host before the walls of Jerusalem. We can scarcely understand the terror and dismay with which a religious Jew must have watched the growth of those mighty oriental despotisms which, rising one after another in the great valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, aspired to nothing less than the conquest of the known world. The victory of a conqueror like Sennacherib meant the extinction of national life and of personal liberty in the conquered people. It meant often enough violent transportation from their homes, separation from their families, with all the degrading and penal accompaniments of complete subjugation. It meant this for the conquered pagan cities. For Jerusalem it meant this and more. The knowledge and worship of God maintained by institutions of Divine appointment—maintained only in that little corner of the wide world—were linked to the fortunes of the Jewish state, and the victory of Sennacherib would have involved, not merely political humiliation, but religious darkness. When, then, his armies advanced across the continent again and again, making of a city a heap, and of a defenced city a ruin, and at last appeared before Jerusalem—when the blast of the terrible ones was as a storm against the wall—there was dismay—natural dismay—in every religious and patriotic soul. It seemed as though a veil or covering, like that which was spread over the holy things in the Jewish ritual, was being spread more and more completely over all the nations at each step of the Assyrian monarch's advances. And in those hours of darkness all true-hearted men in Jerusalem waited for God. He had delivered them from the Egyptian slavery. He had given them the realm of David and of Solomon. He who had done so much for them

would not desert them now. In His own way, at His own time, He would rebuke this insolent enemy of His truth and His people ; and this passionate longing for His intervention quickened the eye and melted the heart of Jerusalem when at last it came. The destruction of Sennacherib's host was one of those supreme moments in the history of a people which can never be lived over again by posterity. The sense of deliverance was proportionate to the agony which had preceded it. To Isaiah and his contemporaries it seemed as though a canopy of thick darkness was lifted from the face of the world. It seemed as though the recollections of slaughter and of death were entirely swallowed up in the absorbing sense of victory,—as though the tears of a city of mourners had been wiped away, as if from Heaven, and the rebuke of God's people—its fallen credit with the surrounding nations—was taken from the earth ; and therefore from the heart of Israel there burst forth a welcome proportioned to the anxious longing that had preceded it ; “ Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us.”

My brethren, the recognition of God's presence in the great turning points of human history, is in all ages natural to religious minds. God, of course, is here in quiet times, when all goes smoothly as though it were regulated by unchangeable law. He is with Israel in the days of Solomon's imperial peace not less than in the days of Hezekiah's humiliation and agony ; but His presence is brought before the imagination more vividly when all seems to be at stake, when the ordinary human resources of confidence and hope are clearly giving way—when nothing but a sudden, sharp turn in what looks like the predestined course of events can avert some fatal catastrophe. This is what was felt by our own ancestors in the days of the Spanish Armada. They recognised the arm of God in that storm in the English Channel, just as Hezekiah recognised it in the destruction of the Assyrian host. This is what was felt by every religious mind throughout Europe when the power of the first Napoleon was broken, first at Leipsic, and then at Waterloo. For such minds it was the re-appearance of all that warranted belief in the moral government of the world. For nearly a score of years men had hoped against hope, and when at last the power of the oppressor was shivered, first by Russia and then by England, men said, “ This is not merely the result of human agencies ; this is from on high ; this is our God ; we have waited for Him ; He will save us.”

But beyond the immediate present, Isaiah sees, it may be, indistinctly, into a distant future. The judgment of Assyria, like that upon Egypt in a previous age, and like that upon Babylon afterwards, foreshadowed some universal judgment—some judgment upon all the enemies of God. The deliverance of Hezekiah and his people, like the deliverance of the Israel of Moses from the Egyptian bondage,—like the deliverance of the captives from Babylon,—foreshadowed some deliverance, final, universal, at the end of time. The visible Divine action upon a small scale was itself a revelation of the principles upon which the world is governed, and which one day will be seen to have governed it in the widest and most inclusive

sense. And thus Isaiah's prediction of the song which would be sung by Israel at the defeat of Sennacherib is a prediction of the song which will be sung by the redeemed when Christ our Lord comes to judgment. In that day, too, will Assyria be judged. "I beheld," says St. John "when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" For that day, too, the Israel of God, whether in earth or in Paradise, will have waited continually. "Wherefore art Thou absent from us so long? Why is Thy wrath so hot against the sheep of Thy pasture? O think upon Thy congregation whom Thou hast purchased and redeemed of old? Arise, O Lord, maintain Thine own cause; remember how the foolish man blasphemeth Thee daily." So prays the Church on earth. And, again, St. John shall tell us what passes beyond the veil. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled." And thus, amid the pleadings and intercessions from on earth and in Heaven, ever ascending around the throne, the centuries pass, the world goes its way, nations and thrones rise and fall, history, as the saying goes, repeats itself. But meanwhile the souls who wait on earth and in Heaven are not doomed to perpetual disappointment. The event which they desire is delayed: it is not finally put off. Every year, every month, every day, brings it assuredly nearer; and when at last it bursts upon the world, it will be welcomed by the servants of God, as was the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army. When Christ our Saviour appears, surrounded by the armies of the angels in the clouds of heaven, it shall be said in that day by millions of redeemed souls, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us."

Between the days of Hezekiah and the final judgment there is another event ever close to the thought of the prophet—the appearance of the great deliverer in the midst of human history. He is, in Isaiah's pages, the virgin-born. He bears the awful name, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" and yet His visage is marred more than any man's and His form more than the sons of men. All that belongs to the nearer history of Judah melts away in the prophet's vision into that greater future which belongs to the King Messiah. The Assyrians themselves are replaced in his thought by the

spiritual enemies of humanity. The city of David and the Mount Zion become the spiritual city of God, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the Church of the Divine Redeemer. Here, as so often, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God with its vast and incalculable consequences to the world of souls, is the key-note to Isaiah's deepest thought. Christ our Lord, combining in His single Person the human weakness of Hezekiah with the Divine Power which smote Sennacherib from heaven, still destroys in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all the peoples, the veil of darkness which before He came hid out God from the soul of man—still makes in this mountain a feast of fat things unto all peoples,—the rich banquet of His precious Word and Sacraments—still and more perfectly swallows up death in victory,—the death of sin in the victory of His own righteousness, imputed and imparted to the sinner of His own free grace. Isaiah, then, is here looking forward to the Christian centuries. That day is the day of Christendom—the period which began eighteen centuries ago, which will last we know not how much longer yet, and in the midst of which we are now living. Isaiah epitomises the heart-song of Christendom, which ascends age by age to the throne of the Redeemer, “It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us.”

“Lo, this is our God.” Christ is not, for us Christians, merely or chiefly the preacher or herald of a religion of which another being, distinct from Himself, is the object. The Gospel creed does not run thus, “There is no God but God, and Christ is His prophet.” The Author and Founder of Christianity is also, at the same time, its Subject and its Substance. We may say, with truth, that Christ is Christianity. He is the main Subject not merely of His Apostles' teaching, but of His own. His perpetual invitations to men, bidding them follow, trust, love, obey, honour Him, would be wrong, or worse than wrong, in a human prophet announcing the claims of a Divine Master. They involve a blasphemy if they are not dictated by a necessary truth. Who and what Jesus Christ is, what He has done, is doing, and will do for us—what our relations to Him are,—these are questions which touch the very heart of Christianity, and when He appears to the soul of man at the crisis of its penitence or its conversion, the greeting which befits Him is not “Lo, this is a good man sent from God to teach some high and forgotten moral truths;”—no, but, “Lo, this is our God: we have waited for Him; He will save us.”

“Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him.” So might Jews have sung—the song of the promises—the children of the prophets,—as they came to the Redeemer. For more than a thousand years, prophecy had been busy with the hope of Israel, making what it could of the indistinct predictions which had been given to the first fathers of the race, and gradually adding, first here, and then there, a new touch, which brought outline and detail out of what had been vague and shapeless, till prophecy became, in the hands of an inspired master like Isaiah, little else than history. Before Christ came the instructed Jew knew the main features, at least, of the Christian creed—Christ's eternal substance in the Godhead,

His superhuman birth, the general character of His teaching, His humiliations, His death, His final triumph. Even around His cradle, elect souls were taught to understand that their longings were satisfied. As Zacharias in the *Benedictus* had told of God's having "raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began," so Mary sings in the *Magnificat* that He, "remembering His mercy, hath holpen His servant Israel, as He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever." And Simeon in the *Nunc Dimittis* cries, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel." What are these but so many variations of the song, "Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him ; He will save us" ?

"Lo, this is our God." So might converts from heathendom have sung, such as were the better spirits who had been trained in the Greek letters and philosophy. As St. Paul said at Athens, the heathen world was busy after its own fashion feeling after God, if haply it might find Him. And in this search it oscillated between, on the one hand, conceptions of the Divine Being so vague, so indeterminate, that, like all pure speculations, they exerted no appreciable influence upon life, and, on the other, a false definiteness which arrayed the Divinity in forms of strength or forms of beauty, but which first compromised His purity by attributing to Him human passions or human vices, and then forgot His unity in their ever-increasing number and variety. And so they went on side by side for ages—the higher philosophy and the popular thought ; the higher philosophy pleading the claims of thought—the popular idolatry endeavouring to satisfy, as best it could, the claims of the heart, the claims of devotion. But if philosophers attained at times to fine conceptions of the spirituality of God, the heart of the people discerned even in those days of darkness a deep truth, namely, that the Divine is only adequately brought close to man through the human. This was at the root of all the mythologies in which such high honour is paid to heroes and divinities conceived as men. This thought inspired the sculptors upon whose unrivalled works we still gaze with wonder in our national museum. They strove to express consummate veneration for divinity by clothing it in the most perfect representations of human beauty that they could copy or conceive. They were constantly endeavouring to shape an ideal of human excellence which might be adequate to express the divine—the divine ideal—which ever haunted—which ever escaped them. Thus did these gifted races through long centuries of error and of effort wait for their God ; and at last He came. He, the incarnate Son, satisfied their craving for the definite and the tangible, by offering them a human form seen by thousands,—a human life, the incidents of which were known, and which entered into the substance and stock of human history, and took up its place there. And He satisfied their craving for the Divine—He who could dare, uncontradicted, to say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Power, as manifested in His miracles, wisdom as manifested

in His words, above all, goodness in which the human conscience could succeed in detecting no flaw that marred its perfectness—these were attributes of the incarnate Saviour which struck such men as Justin Martyr, or Basil, or Gregory, when, with the Gospels in their hands and with the Church before their eyes, they traced out the providential guidance of heathen thought. They, too, in spirit could sing, “Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him ; He will save us.”

“Lo, this is our God.” So have sung in all ages that multitude of human beings whom a profound sense of moral want has brought to the feet of the Redeemer ; for all men have, in the depth of their souls, an unwritten law of right in its eternal contradiction to wrong, and all men know, or may know, by a bitter experience, that in some way or other—in some degree or other—they have surely violated it. It may be the revealed law of the Jews ; it may be the natural, unwritten law of the heathen ; the result is the same. No flesh is justified in the sight of the Author of that law, for by it comes the knowledge and not the cure of sin. So it was with Greek and Jew, with Barbarian and Scythian, with bond and free—so with the most favoured and the most miserable of mankind. Each and all were conscious at their best moments of profound inward dissatisfaction on account of the violated claims of that Being of beings who was the Author of the law of right. And thus it was that when the lovingkindness and love of God towards man appeared, or, as St. Paul means, was so manifested as to strike upon our human senses, it was not by works of righteousness “which we had done, but according to His mercy that He saved us.” He asked those who came to Him to unite themselves to Him, the perfect moral Being manifested in the flesh, by an act of entire adhesion both of the head and heart and will—by an act of faith ; and in return He gave to them and reckoned as theirs His own perfect obedience to the absolute law of eternal right, carried forward, as it had been, even to the height of a death of agony, and thus their past unfaithfulness was to be as though it had never been. It was covered by His faithfulness, which was, practically, theirs. And as He gave them acquittal for the past, so He bestowed vigour, impulse, courage for the future. Before He left the world He instituted supernatural rites, which should be, to the end of time, the channels of this quickening force which we call grace, and through which, if we will, He, the ascended Saviour, makes us what, of ourselves, we never could be—faithful soldiers and servants of the Divine King unto our lives’ end. Ah, as the generations of men come with their chronic restlessness—with their ancient, and, until now, incurable heartaches—to the feet of the Redeemer, they could not, some of them, but exclaim, “Lo, this is our God ! We have had other claimants on the homage we had to give—gods who were mere intelligence or mere force, or intelligence and force combined. Here is One Who is intelligence and force, but Who is also goodness, and as being real goodness, He has not left us, the creatures of His hand, in the profound misery which His intelligence discerned. He is here among us as though one of ourselves, in the form of a servant and obedient to

death, not less in vindication of His own necessary attributes than to relieve our deep woes. It is for Him that our intelligences, our hearts, our consciences, have really waited through ages of moral suspense and misery. His cross and passion, His glorious resurrection and ascension, are warrants to us that our confidence is not misplaced. He will finish His work if we will yield ourselves to His love and to His guidance. We have waited for Him ; He will save us."

My brethren, as I said at first, in this inspired song we have the language of the Christian soul, which has made good use of Advent time, and comes on Christmas morning to unite itself to the Author of its new life in the sacrament of His love. Such a soul, though it be that of an unlettered man, may carry within it the vast experience of centuries, the high and burning thoughts which of old inspired prophets and Apostles. As we kneel before the Eternal Being, there is little, or rather no difference whatever, between us, except such as may have been made by our own use or misuse of what He has placed within our reach. Seriousness during Advent is the title to true inward joy at Christmas, and the longings of the past generations of men for the coming of a Divine Saviour repeat themselves year by year in the souls of His faithful worshippers. May He Who, in His enterprising love, did not abhor the virgin's womb, and was laid in the manger, deign in His love to enter under the roof of many a heart on Christmas morning, and shed within it abundantly His gifts of love, and joy, and peace.

OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM, AND CHRISTIANITY.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 30TH, 1877.

“He that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”—ECCLES. xi. 4.

On the last Sunday in the year it is not easy, my brethren, to decide, at once, how to employ our thoughts to the best advantage ; for, on the one hand, this Sunday falls within the Christmas week, when Christians would desire to be occupied, so far as may be, with the love and mercy of our Divine Saviour, as shown in His taking our nature upon Him that He might redeem us men from sin and death ; and on the other hand, the last Lord's Day in the year is a natural landmark which catches the eye of every man who thinks seriously of the lapse of time. It suggests healthy, moving, solemn thoughts which do not come, at least so readily, on other days—which have a work to do within us as we pass along the road which leads to another world. How are we to decide between the claims of the great festival and the claims of the last hours of the dying year ? The best decision is to choose, if we can, some ground common to both of them ; and this, in a measure, I hope may be secured by the maxim “He that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”

The drift of this saying is plain enough if we look at the context. Solomon is enforcing the duties of charity and hospitality, and he advises his readers to do their best, considering the uncertainty of all human affairs. “Give a portion,” he says, “to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.” Evil, he means, either to the giver or to the receiver. All is uncertainty. All depends on causes beyond human control—causes which defy human resistance.

"If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth. If the tree falls toward the south or toward the north, in the place that the tree falleth there shall it lie." And yet, while it is certain that the clouds and the wind do thus produce results which affect us seriously, it is unpractical, he says, to give too much thought to what we can not influence. The man who does so will never get through his appointed duties in life. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow : he that that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

By the "clouds," then, in this passage are meant those sources of danger or misfortune which are out of our reach, which—do what we may,—we cannot control. We of the modern world have been taught by a living writer to admire the clouds for their own sake, as in themselves objects of exceeding beauty—to trace in them exquisite forms and tints with which nothing else in nature will altogether compare. But this æsthetic admiration of the clouds is a thing of modern growth. In the Bible the clouds are, generally, symbols—symbols of some facts or characteristics of the spiritual, the moral, the human world. With Job the spreadings of the clouds, and the balancing of the clouds are symbols of that which is beyond the grasp of the mind of man. With David the clouds, to which the faithfulness and the truth of God reach, mark the limits of human experience. The clouds that are round about God stand for the veil that screens His providences from human sight. The clouds that are God's chariot are darkness or troubles in the lives or in the souls of men, by controlling which God moves forward in the promotion of His Truth and His kingdom. So again with the Apostles St. Peter and St. Jude. Clouds carried with a tempest are human characters without any stability, and clouds without water are human characters that give out no fertilizing influences whatever on those around or beneath them. In the text, too, the clouds are symbolical—symbolical of that which excites apprehension in the mind of man. He that regardeth the clouds in the language of Solomon is not an artist who is entranced with their beauty : he is, more probably, a farmer who wants to harvest his crops, and who sees in the clouds sources of too possible disaster. But Solomon tells him that nothing is really gained by regarding the clouds. Do what he will he can not disperse them. If they are threatening, it may be better to make a venture than to wait on in hesitation, in disappointment, week after week, before beginning to cut his crops. If he persists in regarding the clouds, his crops must be spoiled. If he reaps at once, the threatened rain may never fall, or he may be beforehand with it.

Here, then, we have at the hands of this Great Master of life and conduct a rule or principle which corresponds with, but which is much more important than, the rules of good farming. We are not to spend the brief day of life in wistfully surveying those awful conditions or those solemnities which surround our existence. We are to go forward. We are to do the utmost in and to make the best of that circle of duties—that state of life—to which it has pleased God to call us.

If we suppose a man to be placed in this world without the light of Revelation, how is he likely to look upon his existence? Is existence a happiness or a misery, a blessing or a curse? This question will, probably, be answered in accordance with deep-seated tendencies of individual temperament, but these tendencies, when prolonged and emphasized, become systems of doctrine—as we call them, philosophies—and so it is that there are two main ways of looking at human life and its surrounding liabilities.

First of all there is what is called optimism—the product of a temper which refuses to see in earthly human existence anything but sunshine. We must all of us have met with persons of this temperament. In private life, and under ordinary circumstances, it must be granted that they are very pleasant people, indeed, to meet. They act on the advice of the old Roman poet: joyfully they snatch the gifts of the passing hour, and they leave the sterner sides of life unnoticed. There are people among ourselves who never allude to death. It is a disagreeable subject. It casts a shadow over the mild sunshine of their earthly existence: it is excluded as if it belonged to the realms of bad taste. This private optimism lives at the west end of London, and forgets that the east end exists at all. It draws a veil over the importunities of poverty and pain: it draws its curtains: it pokes up its fire. It has no patience with people who are always ruffling the serene harmony of this life by forcing on its attention their provoking crotchets. It protests with a good-natured smile that things do not look so gloomy as some people would make you think; and it whispers to itself in familiar words, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thyself for many years: take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry;” and perhaps it fancies that it has got hold of the true meaning of Solomon, and that it is obeying him in not regarding the clouds. This temper or disposition, when brought face to face with the conditions of human existence, tends to shape itself into a doctrine—into a philosophy. Optimism, as a doctrine, assumes that all is with man as it should be—that there is no real want of harmony in his life or in his relations to his Creator—that all is progressing and developing in the best possible way, if we will only let it alone. This optimism of nature knows nothing of a redemption, because it knows nothing of a lapse from original righteousness and peace—because it closes its eyes to all from which we have to be redeemed. It travels through this human world like the Quaker in the story who went from London to Plymouth with the blinds of his carriage always conscientiously drawn down. It shuts its eyes to as much moral and physical evil as it possibly can, but if it can not help seeing evil all around it, then it attempts to account for evil as a necessary stage or step in the development of good, or as only a defect or limitation rather than a something positive and energetic. In short, it ignores both moral disorder and physical decay. It fixes its gaze on the creative and sustaining powers of nature: it hymns their excellence as long as they last.

Look at this way of dealing with existence in the hands of a great writer of European fame. Goethe’s ideal is a healthy, virtuous life, with

a sufficient element of self-restraint to preserve contentment with self, and with existence—a life with occupation enough to dignify the passing moment—a life in which a man can forget all that disturbs him in the present and future. Not that this writer is without experience of the troubles which are inevitable within the frontiers of such a life as this. He lives in his writings. He has described what we know to have been his own experience. In language which will not die he has pictured the disappointments of the heart—the anguish of the sensitive imagination—the illusions which await the ambitions of intellectual progress—the unattainableness of boundless knowledge and of boundless enjoyment in this human life ; and he might seem in all this to be preparing the way of the Lord, but, but like the old pagan Greeks he has no aims really beyond this lower world. His object is to get what happiness out of it he can, and then to bend with dignity to the inevitable. If he does not regard the great clouds, the solemnities of death and pain, and all beyond them which hang in solemn warning around human existence, it is not that he is acting in Solomon's spirit, but, rather, in the spirit of the young man who rejoices in his youth, and whom Solomon condemns.

The objection to this optimistic theory is that it is inconsistent with hard facts. It only suits a man who has good health, fair abilities, and sufficient income. Such a man may, for a certain time, keep the sterner realities of existence at bay—may dream that this is the best of possible worlds in which he lives. But for the immense majority of human beings the language of optimism can never sound other than a heartless irony. It is not well to play the fiddle, like the emperor of old, while Rome is burning, or to dance upon the deck of a sinking ship. Even the buoyant spirits of the Greeks gave way before great calamities. Even the sunny optimism of Goethe, which makes no account of the multitudes who have neither money, nor health, nor talent, but who, nevertheless, are here, and do need some theory or account of their existence—even this temper of refined and cultivated selfishness is, at least once, awed into another mood by the sights and sounds of a great city with its vast accumulated miseries, and poverty, and pain. It learns that there are things in earth if not in heaven, which had not been duly allowed for by its smiling philosophy.

And here an opposite estimate of human existence claims a hearing and it, too, is, first of all, a temper or disposition, and then a theory or a doctrine. We have all of us met with people who make a point of looking at everything on the darkest side—who fondle and cherish and prize their grievances—who, as if under some stern pressure of conscience, do not allow themselves to recognize the happier features of their lot, or of the circumstances in which God has placed them. For them the sun never shines, the flowers never open, the face of man never smiles. They see everything through a thick atmosphere of depression and gloom, and they mistake their own sombre impressions for hard realities. The man with one talent in the parable, who knew that his lord was an austere man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed,

and who went and hid his talent in the earth, was a genuine pessimist. The pessimist has no eye for the creative and recuperative powers of nature. He lingers over its tendencies to corruption and decay. He sees before him only death in life ; never life in death. For him man's history is made up of recurring cycles of unprofitable experience—civilization emerging from, and sinking back into, barbarism, without any lasting gains for human progress and improvement. For him human life is a constant victory of evil over good, or a succession of efforts which are at best, as he thinks, hopeless, aimless, abortive. Pessimism, too, has had a great exponent—a countryman of Goethe ; but we need not go abroad to find its prophets. It is the creed of a popular poet of our own—the poet of fruitless earthly suffering—the poet of profound melancholy—the poet of indulged defiance of destiny—of all the accumulated and tragic bitterness of the human heart. Byron, like Goethe, lives in his creations. He is his own Cain who, after passing through boundless space, descends with Lucifer into the realms of death, and fills his heart with soreness against God.

“ Why do I exist ?
Why art *thou* wretched ? Why are all things so ?
Even he who made us must be as the maker
Of things unhappy ! To produce destruction
Can surely never be the task of joy.”

And Byron is Manfred, who hears the curse,—

“ There are shades which will not vanish ;
There are thoughts thou canst not banish.
By a power to thee unknown
Thou canst never be alone.
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud ;
Thou art gathered in a cloud,
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.”

He himself is Manfred, who exclaims—

“ We are the fools of time and terror : days
Steal on us, and steal from us ! yet we live,
Loathing our life and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke,
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,
Which sinks with sorrow or beats quick with pain
Or joy that ends in agony or faintness—
In all the days of past and future, for
In life there is no present, we can number
How few—how less than few—wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill
Be but a moment's.”

Such is full-blown pessimism. It lives in this wail of anguish issuing from the depths of a human heart. And yet this must be said for it—that when Christianity is rejected or unknown, it has a larger basis of fact, upon the whole, than optimism. The clouds, after all, are there ; and they do not disappear because we forget them. Even to look at them until we forget that there is the sun, after all, beyond them—even this is, perhaps, not a more ruinous mistake than to ignore them altogether.

One of the incidental proofs of the Divine greatness of Christianity is to be found in its attitude towards these opposing estimates of human life, for the religion of Christ is by turns pessimist and optimist. Christianity quarrels not with the principles of these ways of looking at life, but with their misapplication. Christ our Lord can not allow that human nature, weakened, impoverished, degraded, by the fall—exposed to the inroads of temptation and of sin—subject to the laws of sickness and of death—destined to an eternity which will correspond, substantially, with the moral qualities of the earthly life—is a fitting subject for light-hearted self-congratulations. Nor, on the other hand, is it consistent with faith in and respect for His finished work to despair of souls, or to despair of societies which He has redeemed, in forgetfulness of the new forces with which He has endowed them. St. Paul is pessimist enough in his description of the state and prospects of the heathen world at the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans. But who more optimist than he? Who more buoyantly confident of the splendid destinies reserved for the servants of Christ, than this same Apostle when he describes the effects and working of the law of the Spirit of life in his Epistle to the Romans, or of our incorporation with the human nature of the Redeemer in the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians? With human nature left to itself he can hope for nothing. With human nature redeemed and invigorated by Jesus Christ our Lord, he can despair of nothing. Of the one he says, "I know that in me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing." Of the other he cries, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

And thus we see how the birth of our Divine Lord into this human world was the consecration of optimism, and the condemnation of pessimism. Pessimism which is common sense in a heathen is, in a Christian, disloyalty to Christ. Optimism which in a heathen would be sheer folly is, in a Christian who knows what Christ has done for him, mere common sense. The reason is because a new and Divine power has, at the birth of Christ, entered into human nature—has reversed its old downward inclination—has corrected the warp towards evil which fatally bent it—has endowed it with a vigour which comes from heaven. "The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." And hence, in the words of the text we have a maxim applying, no doubt, in its measure, to other believers in providence, but applying in an especial degree to Christians. The Christian who regardeth the clouds—who looks long and wistfully at evils, or at threatenings of evils which are beyond his power to remove or to correct—shall not reap the harvest of joy or work which lies all ready to his hand; for so to regard the clouds takes time and thought and effort, and our stock of these things is too small to admit of any wasteful expenditure. So to regard the clouds depresses the spirits and enfeebles the arm when strength of purpose and resolute exertion are wanted for the work of God. There are evils enough nearer the earth than the clouds—evils of our

own causing—evils springing from our own neglect—evils lying right across our path or at the side of it, and on these we cannot bestow too much attention ; but the clouds, however much we may gaze at them, and wish that they were rearranged or dispersed—the clouds are, after all, out of our reach.

And surely just now there are clouds—clouds in the sky of our national life. Who does not see them? A scanty harvest, stagnation in trade and manufactures, lack of buoyancy, so they say, in the revenue, disturbed relations between capital and labour, hard times in short, when we compare them with the close of 1876—these are clouds visible to every observant eye. And there are other clouds of which I need hardly speak—clouds of war or of alarms of war. The political atmosphere is charged with them. We seem already to catch the flash of the lightning on the distant horizon. We listen for the distant peal of the thunder. One cloud there is, as it seems to many of the noblest spirits in England—one cloud which has of late hung threateningly over our beloved country—the risk lest, through some over-strained anxiety respecting contingencies remotely affecting one portion of our empire, we should be hurried into the expenditure of blood and treasure on behalf of an ancient system of cruelty and wrong which is already, as if sentenced by the mercy and by the justice of God, passing away before our eyes.

May He Who doth dispose and turn the hearts of kings, as it seemeth best, to His godly wisdom, so dispose and govern the hearts of those who guide the destinies of this great empire, that we may escape the crime and the scourge of such a war as this—that this cloud which has added to the depression of our short December days may quickly and utterly roll away. I am far from saying that, in a free and, practically speaking, self-governing country, all the evils which I have mentioned are wholly beyond the reach of individual action. Doubtless, some of us can affect them very powerfully. All of us may do something—each in his place and station—by the conscientious formation and utterance of opinion ; above all, by the resolute discharge of personal duty. But, for the most part, these great issues are quite beyond us, and if, in stirring and anxious times, we cannot help thinking of them, we had better not think of them too much, or we shall neglect the evils of our daily life. The best service is rendered to the country by the man who makes duty, honesty, disinterestedness, his guiding principles, even though it be not his business to regard the clouds.

And there are clouds in the religious sky, too. Who does not see them? The entirely new position which has been assumed by unbelief within the last twenty years, the unrebuked denial of revealed truth, even by teachers of religion, the deepening divisions between Christians in face of the advancing foe—brother going to law with brother, and that before those who do not share our faith—and then, as a too natural result of this, the tendency of some minds, anxious to find at any price a refuge from the blasts of controversy, to accept imposing claims and tenets which were unknown to the Christianity of the early ages, but which

render a religious system, if not true, yet, at least, undoubtedly organised and strong—these are some of the clouds in the religious sky of our time. And it is difficult for those who feel deeply about these things to keep their eyes off the clouds, and to set about their humble daily round of Christian duty. Certainly we can do something—nay, much, in respect to these clouds. We may make them subjects of prayer. It is better to complain to God than to man—better in itself and more remunerative. But, having done this, it is of no real use to keep looking at the clouds. If God had placed us like the prophets of old on their watch-towers—like a Christian bishop, it may be, now-a-days in the spiritual observatory of his diocese—it would be a duty, no doubt, to give attention no less to the clouds than to the stars and the sun. As it is, evils close to us, evils around us, evils before us, above all, evils within us, have a first claim on our thought and effort.

Clouds, too, there may be in the sky of the family or in the sky of the soul. The loss of means, the loss of friends, the failure of well-meant designs, the misconduct of children—these things weigh on us. We try to get rid of them. We find ourselves reverting to them when alone by day and by night. We regard the clouds. And in the soul the unaccountable decay or loss of spiritual anxiety—the paralysis during considerable tracts of time of the power of prayer—the dark thoughts which will impair the will and chill the affections—the strange and mysterious influences which contact with the bodily frame does undoubtedly exert over the life of the spirit—these are inward clouds that cause deep and painful apprehension. Of all these some may be controlled by resolute service; much may be alleviated by prayer; but alike in the family and in the soul there are clouds which we can not touch. Let us not regard them: let us leave them to God. Yes, as we stand on the threshold of another year—as we cast a thought backwards on those who were among us twelve months ago, friends, relatives, teachers, rulers, and who have now passed into the world unseen—as we strain our eyes to look forward, if possible, into the depths of the coming time, and trace, if it may be, any distant intimation of what is in store for us—we must feel that we may not waste thought, passion, energy, on evils which we can not hope to modify or remove. Life is too short. Its real business is too urgent. Its issues are too momentous. Above all, God, Who maketh the very clouds which disquiet us the chariots of His providences through the courses of time—God is too near us. He is with us. God, the self-existent, the infinite, the everlasting—God, the all-powerful, the all-wise, the all-good—God, the Father Who created, the Son Who has redeemed, the Spirit Who sanctifies us—God, Who is the source and Who is the true end of our separate beings, and Who teaches us at Bethlehem as at Calvary the infinitude of His love—God bids us remember that He is Lord also of the darkest clouds, and that to trust Him, instead of regarding them too anxiously, is to reap sooner or later the Eternal harvest.

“THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.”

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON APRIL 7TH, 1878.

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : how much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?”—*HAB.* ix. 13, 14.

TO-DAY we pass the line which parts the first five weeks in Lent from that last fortnight which is especially devoted to contemplating the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and, accordingly, the Gospel tells us of the attempt of the Jews to stone Him in the Temple—one of the first drops, as it has well been termed, of that storm which burst in all its fury upon Calvary ; and the Epistle teaches us how to think about Him in the whole course of these, His sufferings. He is not merely a good man weighed down by so much pain of body and mind. He is the High Priest of the human race Who is offering a victim in expiation of human sin, and that victim Himself. He is the one real Sacrificer of Whom all the Jewish priests had for those long centuries been only shadows, and His sacrifice is the one offering which throughout all ages has power in Heaven. And so as He passes within the veil of the sanctuary above He is opening a way for us, if we will only follow, to an eternal home in the heart of God. “Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

Now, that which must strike all careful readers of the Bible, in those passages which refer to the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the stress which is laid upon His blood. A long course of violent

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treatment, ending in such a death as that of crucifixion, must involve, as we know from the nature of the case, the shedding of the blood of the sufferer ; but our modern feeling would probably have led us to treat this as an accidental or subordinate feature of the event. If we had had with our human feelings to write those books which are the title-deeds of Christendom, we should either not refer to it, or we should pass lightly and quickly over it. We should throw it into the background of our description. We should give the outline ; we should let the details be taken for granted ; we should trust to the imagination of our readers to fill up the blank ; we should shrink from stimulating their sensibilities to pain—from harrowing their feelings by anything beyond. Does it not seem, my brethren, as if it were carried into our modern life that rule of the old Greek tragedians, that nothing violent or horrible—nothing that shocks or gives pain—if possible, should meet the eye of the beholder ? If a deed of violence takes place in our streets or in our homes, do we not, as quickly as may be, remove all traces of it ? Has it not been urged as a reason for continuing to put criminals to death by hanging, instead of adopting some more rapid and certain mode of destroying life, that it is desirable to spare the bystanders the sight of blood ? Now, I do not say that this modern feeling is mere unhealthy sentimentalism. On the contrary, it may very well arise from that honourable sympathy with, and respect for, human nature which draws a veil gladly over its miseries and its wounds. But the New Testament in its treatment of the passion of Christ is, as we cannot but observe, strangely and strongly in contrast with any such feeling. The four evangelists who differ so much in their accounts of our Lord’s birth and public ministry seem to meet at last around the foot of the cross, and to agree, if not in relating the same incidents, yet, certainly, in the minuteness of the detail of their narratives. In the shortest of the Gospels when we reach the passion, the occurrences of a single day take up a space which had been assigned to years. From the last supper to the burial in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea, we have a very complete account of what took place from hour to hour. Each incident that added to the pain or the shame, each bitter word, each insulting act, each outrage upon justice or upon mercy, of which the Divine Sufferer was a victim, is carefully recorded. But especially the agony and bloody sweat, the public scourging, the crowning with the thorns, the nailing to the wood of the cross, the opening the side with a spear, are described by the evangelists—incidents, each one of them, be it observed, which must have involved the shedding of Christ’s blood. And in the writings of the Apostles to their converts more is said of the blood of Christ than of anything else connected with His death—more even than of the cross. As we read them we might almost think that the shedding of His blood was not so much an accompaniment of His death as its main object and purpose. Thus, St. Paul tells the Romans that Christ is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. He tells them that they are justified by the blood of Christ. He writes to the Ephesians that they

have redemption through Christ's blood ; to the Colossians, that our Lord has made peace through the blood of His cross ; to the Corinthians, that the holy sacrament is so solemn a rite because it is the communion of the blood of Christ. Thus, St. Peter contrasts the slaves, whose freedom from captivity was purchased with such corruptible things as silver and gold, with the case of Christians redeemed from death by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and immaculate. Thus, St. John exclaims that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth Christians from all sin ; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews this blood is referred to as the blood of the covenant, wherewith Christians are sanctified—as the blood of the everlasting covenant—as the blood of sprinkling which pleads with God for mercy, and so is contrasted with the blood of Abel which cries for vengeance. And in the last book of the New Testament the beloved disciple at the very outset gives thanks and praise to Him that has “washed us from our sins in His own blood.” And the blessed in Heaven sing that He has redeemed them to God by His blood ; and the saints are there because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; and they have overcome their foe, not in their own might, but by the blood of the Lamb ; and He Whose name is called the word of God, and Who rides in the vision on a white horse, and on Whose head are many crowns, is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood.

Much more might be said on the subject, but enough has already been said to show that in the New Testament the blood of Christ is treated as no mere accident of His death, but as a very important feature of it—nay, as having a substantive value of whatever kind which is all its own, and the question is, How are we to account for the prominence which is thus assigned to it ?

This question is sometimes answered by saying that the language of the Apostles about the blood of Christ is, after all, merely the language of metaphor and symbol. The Apostles, we are told, found in the Old Testament a stock of poetic illustration and imagery ready to their hands, and, although it had reference to the ideas and usages of a dying system, they employed them freely for their own purposes, much as a cultivated gentleman in a past generation used to quote the Greek and Latin poets in Parliament or in society by way of decorating new ideas with the phrases of a literature that had passed away. This is what has been urged by some modern writers : but it must be at once said that any such account of the apostolic language about the preciousness and power of the blood of Jesus Christ is unworthy at once of the seriousness of the subject. Unworthy of the seriousness of the men ; for, after all, the Apostles and apostolic writers were not mere retailers of splendid phrases. They were teachers of a truth which they believed to have come from Heaven, and for which they were prepared to die. And unworthy of the seriousness of the subject, too, for surely the deepest truths that can move the wills and hearts of men are not fit subjects for mere antiquarian or literary display. They would be better avoided altogether, if they

are not set forth in the most glorious and plainest language which those who profess to teach them can command. If the Apostles used the language of the Old Testament about the Jewish sacrifices in order to describe their own living faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, this was because in the belief of the Apostles a real relation already existed between the two things. The Jewish sacrifices were predestined types and shadows of the sacrificed Son of God. In the passage before us the day of atonement and its characteristic rites are present to the mind of the sacred writer, and of those rites the sprinkling of the blood of the victim was a prominent feature. But then the question still remains, Why should this sprinkling of blood have been a prominent feature on the Jewish day of atonement? Why should it have been allowed to colour so largely the thought and the words of the Apostle? Why, in a word, should the blood of the Redeemer rather than His pierced hands, rather than His bruised or mangled body, rather than His face with its radiance—its Divine radiance—scarcely shining through the tears and the shame, be dwelt on in the Apostolic writings as the chosen symbol of His passion and His death?

Certainly, my brethren, in all the languages of the world, blood is the proof—the warrant—of affection and of sacrifice. To shed blood voluntarily for another is to give the best that man can give. It is to give a sensible proof of—it is to give almost a bodily form to—love.

This, our profound human instinct, is common to all ages, to all civilisations, to all religions. The blood of the soldier who dies for duty,—the blood of the martyr who dies for truth,—the blood of the man who dies that another may live—blood like this is an embodiment of the highest moral powers in human life. And these powers most assuredly were, all of them, represented in the blood that flowed from the wounds of Christ on Calvary.

And yet in saying this we have not altogether accounted for the apostolic sayings about the blood of Christ. That blood involves something more than any of those moral triumphs—something more than all of them taken together.

Observe, then, the peculiar and deep significance which is ascribed to blood in the earliest books of the Bible—the five books of Moses. There we are taught that between the blood, whether of man or of animal, and the life-principle, or soul, there is a certain and intimate connection. In those first laws which were given to Noah after the flood, man was authorised to eat the flesh but not the blood of the animals around him. Why was this? Because the blood is the life or soul of the animal. "Flesh with the blood thereof which is the life thereof shall ye not eat." The laws of Moses himself go farther. The man, whether Israelite or stranger, who eats any manner of blood is to be put to death, and the reason is repeated. The soul of the flesh, that is of the nature living in the flesh, is in the blood. This is why the blood of the sacrificed animals is shed by way of atonement for sin. The blood atones—(this is the exact sense of the original language)—by means of the soul that is in it.

“THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.”

Once more. In the fifth book of Moses, permission is given to the Israelites to kill and eat the sacrificial animals for common food, just as freely as the roebuck or the hart which were not used for sacrifice ; but again there follows the caution,—“Only be sure that thou eat not the blood,” and the reason for the caution,—“The blood is the soul. Thou must not eat the soul with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat of it. Thou shalt pour it on the earth like water.” This thrice repeated precept not to touch animal blood has passed away together with much else of the ancient ceremonial law. True, it was enforced by prophets, who insisted little or not at all on the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic code. True, it was enforced for a while even by Apostles as binding on the first converts from heathendom. It was adhered to, not, indeed, by any means universally, but with much tenacity, in the primitive Christian Church. But it has gone the way of the ceremonial system of which it really formed a part, and it was only fulfilled to disappear. And yet the reason of the precept remains as a matter of lasting interest,—the reason, namely, that blood is the element of our animal existence which is most closely associated with the principle of life. My brethren, what life is in itself, whether in the tree or in the animal,—whether in a man or in an angel,—who of us shall say? Life is a mystery ever close to us, yet ever eluding our inquisitive research. We track it only in its symptoms—only piecemeal. We associate intelligence with the brain. We trace the unspoken language of the soul in the movements or in the motionlessness of the countenance, in the expression of the eye, in the gesture of the hand,—even in the gait or the sway of the body. But of this we find little in Scripture which, without at all denying the relation of the soul to other parts of our bodily frame, does, unquestionably, so far as the soul is the principle of life, of feeling, and of growth, associate it with the blood. And the question may be fairly asked, whether this scriptural doctrine of the intimate relation of the soul or life-power to the blood is borne out by independent enquiry. It is obvious, first of all, I take it, that the strength of the body depends on the quantity of the blood—that with the loss of blood, feeling, power of movement—all the bodily activities—are lost also. The blood, then, is the basis or support of bodily life. But it is more. It is also the material from which the body and its various secretions arise. It is the substance out of which the animal life in all its forms is actually developed. Whether the various kinds of material which make up the human body are contained in the blood in a state of actual diversity, or whether they exist, indeed, only in potency, and are drawn out of it by the functional powers of the bodily organs—this may be a matter of controversy ; but it is agreed by high authorities on such subjects that they do thus pre-exist in the blood which is thus the principle. not merely of bodily life, but of bodily growth and formation.

This, then, is what is assumed when holy Scripture speaks of the blood as the life or soul of a man or animal. But as an acute Jewish writer has well observed, the soul in question is only the sensitive soul which man possesses in common with animals. It is not the thinking, intelligent,

self-conscious being: it is not the spirit which proceeds immediately from God and which is encased in the sensitive soul as the apple of an eye is in the eye. The spirit of man is only so far resident in the blood as it is already resident in the sensitive soul which is in the blood. The existence of the spirit of man is strictly independent of any element of his bodily life, and as we know it will survive it.

But in Christ our Lord there was something more than body and soul and spirit. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead. As man differs from the animals in possessing an undying spirit, as well as, and together with, a sensitive soul or life, so in Christ our Redeemer were joined by an intimate—by an indissoluble—union, not merely a human soul and spirit, but also, above these, that Divine nature which was begotten of the Father before all worlds. Nay, rather, it was this His eternal person which owned all else in Him,—in which all else centred,—to which all else attached itself. When He Who had already existed from an eternity vouchsafed to enter into the sphere of time, He wrapped around Him in its completeness, but without its stains, that human nature which then He made His own. He took it upon Him, not as a garment which He might lay aside, but as that which, from the moment of His incarnation, and for ever, was to form part of His being. And, therefore, the blood which flowed in His veins and which He shed at His circumcision and in His mental agony, not less than in His scourging and on the cross, was the blood, not merely of the son of Mary, but of the infinite and eternal Being thus condescendingly united to a created form. It is an Apostle who bids the pastors of the Church of Ephesus “feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.”

This, then, is what is meant in the text when it contrasts the atoning power of the blood of Christ with that of the blood of bulls and goats. The blood of the sacrificed animals had a certain value, because as we have seen, it was so intimately connected with the life or sensitive soul of the animal. It did, as the Apostle puts it, and by Divine appointment, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. By the flesh is here meant the natural, outward, earthly life of man—especially all that bore in the way of outward conduct and condition upon his membership in the commonwealth of Israel. The sacrifices on the day of atonement, and especially the sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer towards the tabernacle, did signify the substitution of life for life, and were at any rate accepted as establishing the outward religious position of those for whom they were offered. That they could do more was impossible. The nature of things was opposed to it. It was not possible, says the Apostle, that the blood of bulls and goats should put away sin. The blood of these animals could not operate in the proper sphere of spiritual natures, but then it foreshadowed nothing less than the blood of Christ. It was His blood Who, “through His eternal spiritual being”—(it is not the Holy Ghost who is here meant, but the Divine nature of the incarnate Christ)—“offered Himself without spot to God.” The eternal spiritual nature of Christ vivifying the blood of Christ is contrasted in the Apostle’s thought

with the perishing life of the sacrificed animal resident in the blood of the animal; and so the value of the sacrifices, and so the power of the blood to cleanse or to save, varies with the dignity of the life which each represents—in one case that of the creature not even endowed with immortality or reason, in the other that of the infinite and eternal Being, Who, for us men and for our salvation, had come down from heaven.

“How much more shall the blood of Christ.” At length we see what it is that the sacred writer really means. He says in effect to his readers, “You have no doubt that under the Jewish dispensation the sacrifices on the day of atonement, the blood of the slain goat and red heifer, could restore the sinful Israelite to his place and his privileges in the sacred nation. It did ‘sanctify to the purifying of the flesh.’ But here is the blood not of a sacrificial animal, not of a mere man, not merely of the very best of men, but of one who was God manifest in the flesh. Who shall calculate the effects of his self-sacrifice? Who shall limit the powers of his voluntary death? Who shall say what his blood may or may not achieve on earth or elsewhere? Plainly we are here in the presence of an agency which altogether distances and rebukes the speculations of reason. We can but listen for some voice which shall speak to us with a Divine authority, and from beyond the veil. We can but be sure of this, that the blood of the eternal Christ must infinitely transcend in its efficacy that which was shed upon the temple altars. It must be equal—more than equal—to redress the woes—to efface the transgressions—of a guilty world.” This, indeed, is what the argument invites—the absolutely limitless power of the precious blood. But the sacred writer puts, as it were, a strong restraint upon himself, and he contents himself economically with pointing to one single result—“How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

“Dead works”—works that are not good in that their motive is good, or bad, in that their motive is bad; but dead, in that they have no sort of motive at all—in that they are merely outward and mechanical affairs of propriety, routine, form, to which the spirit and the heart contribute nothing. Dead works! To how much of our lives, ay, of the higher and the religious side of our lives, may not this vivid and stern expression most justly be applied? How many acts in the day are gone through without intention, without deliberation, without any effort to consecrate them to the Author of our being, without any reflex effect upon the faith and love of the doer. How many prayers, and words, and deeds are of this soulless character, and if so, how are they wrapping our spirits round with bandages of insincere habit, on which already the avenging angels may have traced the motto, “Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.”

The blood of Christ delivers us from much else, but especially from these dead works, for just as the blood of the slain animal means the life of the animal, so the blood of Christ crucified means the life of Christ—

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His life Who is the eternal truth and the eternal charity. And thus, when a Christian man feels its redemptive touch within him, he has a motive, varying, indeed, in its strength, but always powerful, for being, at least, genuine, he means his deeds, his words, his prayers. He knows that life is a solemn thing,—that it has tremendous issues. He measures these issues day by day by the value of the redeeming blood. If Christ has shed His blood, then life must be well worth living—well worth saving. A new energy is thrown into everything—a new interest lights up every surrounding circumstance. The little incidents of life, its great opportunities, its trials, its failures, its successes, the characters, the dispositions of friends, the public events of the times, the details of the home, are looked at with eyes that see in them nothing whatever that is indifferent. And when all is meant for God's glory, though there may and must be—ay, to the very end—much of weakness and inconsistency, the conscience is practically purged from dead works to serve the living God.

“The blood of Christ.” It was shed on Calvary eighteen centuries ago, but it flows on throughout all time. It belongs now not to the physical, but to the supersensuous world. It washes souls, not bodies. It is sprinkled not on altars, but on consciences. But, although invisible, it is not for that the less real and energetic. It is the secret power of all that purifies—of all that invigorates—souls in Christendom. Do we believe in one baptism for the remission of sins? It is because to the eyes of faith the blood of Christ tinges the water of the font. Do we believe that God has “given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people being penitent the absolution and remission of their sins?” It is because the blood of Christ applied to the conscience by the Holy Spirit makes this declaration a solemn reality. Do we find in the Bible more than an ancient literature—in Christian instruction more than a mental exercise—in the life of thought about the unseen and the future more than food for speculation? This is because we know that the deepest of all questions is that which touches our individual moral state before God; and that, therefore, as sinners, we are, above all things, interested in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness in the blood of Christ. Do we look to our successive communions for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls during the days of our pilgrimages? This is because the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for us can preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life. Does even a single prayer offered in sincerity of purpose avail to save a despairing soul? This is because we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

“The blood of Christ.” Who of us does not need to be sprinkled with it. Christians as we are, what are our lives, our habits, our thoughts, the course of our existence, as these lie spread out before the eyes of the All-seeing Being? The works from which we need to be purged are, it may be, not merely soulless or dead, but actively evil. The prayer which befits us kneeling before our crucified Master is not merely “Purge my conscience from dead works to serve the living God,” but “Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.” Let one or both of these prayers, dear brethren, be ours during these ensuing solemn days. If they are offered earnestly they will not be unheard. The eternal Spirit is here to sprinkle with the precious blood all souls that seek purification or pardon, and the promise made to Israel in Egypt still holds good—still may be claimed in a far higher sense by the Israel of God, whether in life or in death—“When I see the blood I will pass over, and the plague shall not be upon you.”

THE SOLITUDE OF CHRIST IN REDEMPTION.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 14TH, 1878.

"Oh, go not far from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me."—
PSALM xxii. 11.

THIS is one of the cries of the ideal or superhuman sufferer, of whose agonies, both of mind and body, we have so complete a picture in this 22nd Psalm. Many attempts from time to time have been made to explain this psalm by some of the circumstances in the life of David, or in the life of Hezekiah, or of other persons in Jewish history, who have combined eminent piety with great misfortunes; but these attempts one and all have been unsuccessful. The psalm describes a kind and a degree of suffering of which we have no records in the Old Testament, and to which, most assuredly, nothing in the known life of David at all corresponds. Yet there is no doubt whatever, as the best scholars agree, that the psalm is from David's own hand, and the question is how David could ever have brought himself to write as though he were himself feeling and thinking as he here describes. The answer is, that the picture of a great sufferer presented itself to David's soul—took possession of it—took such an entire possession of it that, as in the highest natural poetry may also sometimes happen, the writer forgot himself and lost himself utterly in the subject which possessed him. The words were David's words, but the thoughts, the hopes, the fears, the anguish, the exultation—these were of another and a higher than David. David was but a copyist. David was writing down, for the good of the times to come, what in his illuminated spirit he saw with his eyes and heard with his ears. His picture of an ideal sufferer was laid up among the sacred books of Israel, but many a century had to pass before men could know what it meant and to Whom it referred. When Jesus, our Divine Lord, hung dying upon the cross, He interpreted

this psalm of Himself, by using its very first verse as the fourth of those seven last words which He uttered in those solemn words—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani?" "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—as uttered by the Redeemer in the darkest hour of His sufferings, gives the key to all that follows. Henceforth, we Christians read this psalm as if repeated throughout by Jesus on the cross, or, at least, by Jesus in His passion. As His dying eye surveys the multitude of human beings in whom an unreasoning hate of truth and goodness had for the time quelled all other thoughts and emotions—in whom the wild beast that is latent in our human nature had asserted, for the moment, his sway with a frightful power—Jesus might say, "Many oxen are come about Me; fat bulls of Bashan close Me in on every side. They gape upon Me with their mouths, as it were a ramping and a roaring lion. Many dogs are come about Me: the council of the wicked layeth siege against Me." And as He glances down on His mangled body, at His pierced hands and feet, and as He feels the parching thirst, the inward collapse, the exhaustion of approaching death, He murmurs, "I am poured out like water; all My bones are out of joint; My heart also in the midst of My body is even like melting wax. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; My tongue cleaveth to My gums; and thou shalt bring Me to the dust of death. They have pierced My hands and My feet. I may tell all My bones." And as He listens to the taunts which fall upon His ear, and as He watches the doings of the men who crowd eagerly around the foot of the cross on which He hangs, He complains, "They that see Me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out their lips. They shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him if He will have Him. They stand staring and looking upon Me. They part My garments among them; they cast lots upon My vesture." And as He strains the eye of His human soul to gaze into futurity—to pierce the veil that parts the agony and desolation of the moment from the triumph and the peace that await Him beyond—He cries, "The Lord hath not despised nor abhorred the low estate of the poor. He hath not hid His face from Him, but when He called unto Him He heard Him. My praise is of Thee in the great congregation. The ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord. My seed shall serve Him; they shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." The psalm is throughout written—we might almost say written to order—to describe, as from within, the sufferings of our Divine Lord upon the cross. Nowhere else in the Old Testament does the Holy Spirit more vividly testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

In this psalm there is one feature of our Lord's sufferings upon which particular stress is laid: I mean His desolation, or solitude. It is the key-note of the psalm, the very first words of which complain, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It finds expression again and again, nowhere, perhaps, more pathetically than in the cry, "Oh, go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me." Some centuries, my brethren, after David, a figure passed before the soul of the greatest of the prophets, which shadowed out this aspect of a superhuman suffering, but from another point of view. It was the form of one coming as from Eden—coming along the wonted road of Israel's deliverance—coming with garments dyed in the vintage of Bozrah, emblems of a struggle which meant wounds and blood, glorious in His apparel—His moral apparel of righteousness and mercy—and travelling in the greatness of His strength. And when the seer gazed intently at this figure and

asked Who He was, the reply came, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." And when a further question was ventured—"Why art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" it was answered, as though this were of the very essence of the conflict, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none beside Me." Yet in His sufferings Jesus was alone—alone in spirit, though encompassed by a multitude. In His passion He experienced a threefold solitude—the solitude of greatness, the solitude of sorrow, and the solitude of death.

The loneliness of the great is one of the ironies of human life. The great are lonely because they are great—because, had they peers and companions, they would cease to be what they are, at least in relation to those around them. This holds good of greatness in all its forms, whether greatness of station, or greatness of genius, or greatness of character. Take the word "great" in its most popular, but least warrantable sense. What is the case with the great in station? The solitude of the throne—it is proverbial. Not that the monarch is without companions. From the nature of the case, the monarch can command companions as can no other person in the realm. No court in the world is wanting in deferential ministers of the royal will, whose business it is to furnish companionship to royalty, whose hourly effort it is to carry out the wishes of the sovereign, and to thwart or to screen from his sight all that may traverse a passing inclination. But companionship such as this is perfectly compatible with solitude. That free, buoyant intercourse of mind with mind, of heart with heart—that entire reciprocity of sympathies which knows no limits save those which are imposed by truth and charity—is banned by the exacting etiquette of a court—is hardly, if at all, possible for the occupant of a throne. "The divinity which doth hedge a king" hath its drawbacks, and it is costly. A monarch is always more or less of a solitary—alone in his joys, alone in his sorrows. Reverence and envy conspire to deprive him of his ordinary share in the hearts of men around him. And this solitude of the throne, let us never forget it, is one reason for the claim of its occupants upon the charity and the prayers of the Christian Church. This, our tribute of the best sympathy, is one means of redressing the privations and of lessening the dangers of a great position occupied for the public good.

Then, again, there is the greatness of genius. Even when genius unbends—when it is popular and fruitful—even when it ministers to the enjoyment and the instruction of millions, it is by its instinct solitary; it lives alone. The mountain peaks which are the crowning beauty of a vast and fertile plain, purchase their prerogative elevation at a great cost. They are cold, bleak, inaccessible. Genius lives in distant realms of thought. Genius lives amidst flashes and aspirations which do not exist for others. In the presence of these it is alone. We may be sure that a man like Shakespeare was familiar with much that he never thought of communicating to the quiet, sensible, excellent, commonplace people among whom for the most part he passed his days. In his highest and deepest thought, from the nature of the case, being such as his God had made him, he was a solitary.

And then there is greatness of character. This is the most legitimate use of the word. True greatness might seem at first sight to be very far from solitary—to be, on the contrary, unselfish, beneficent, communicative. Undoubtedly, such greatness draws to itself human hearts. It wins human interests; and yet how often are there features in a really noble character, which, when they become plain to us, the mass of man-

kind, repel rather than attract. The unswerving adherence to known truth, the resolute sacrifice of immediate advantage to the claims of principle, the flashes of severity which radiate from the purest and from the highest love—these are not popular qualities. History is full of examples of men whose benevolence and kindness and activity have at first won general applause and admiration, but who have been deserted, hated, denounced, perhaps even put to death, when the real character of their greatness was discovered. Such a man was Savonarola. His story has been made familiar to Englishmen—we may well and gratefully remember it in this place—by the pen of Dean Milman. Savonarola, amid imperfections which are inseparable from our human weakness, was one of the greatest religious teachers that the world has seen. He aimed—as all sincerely great minds must aim—at carrying Christian principles into the public and social life of man. He held that politics might be no less Christian than personal conduct. The people which had welcomed his teaching with passionate enthusiasm assisted at his cruel and ignominious death. Savonarola was too great even for Florence. And there have been few ages in the world's history when this lesson has not repeated itself—when integrity of character and elevation of aim have not experienced the alternate vicissitudes of popular favour and popular dislike or violence. Our own age and country are not exceptions to the rule.

Now, our Lord in His passion was great in these various ways. He was indeed, as it seemed to the eye of sense, a worm and no man, a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people; and yet, as He said before Pilate, He was a king, and He felt, as no other can ever have felt, the isolation of royalty. His mental eye took in vaster horizons than were ever suspected to exist to any around Him. He had meat to eat that they knew not of. In this, as in so many other ways, He lived in a sphere of thought which was for them impossible. And, above all, in character He was not merely courageous, true, disinterested, loving, and all these in a degree which distanced the highest excellence around Him: He was also that which no other human form had been before, or has been since: He was sinless. And thus, as He went forth to die, He was in a moral and an intellectual and a social solitude—a solitude created by the very prerogatives of His being. His elevation above His fellows itself cut Him off from that sympathy which equals can most effectually give. And hence one motive of the prayer of His human soul in the psalm, “Oh, go not far from Me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help Me.”

There is the solitude of greatness, my brethren, but there is also the solitude of sorrow. Certainly, sorrow is a link of human fellowship. Sooner or later all men suffer. “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” No condition of life, no variety of temperament, can purchase exemption from the universal law of suffering. To some it comes as the chastening which is necessary to perfection; to others it comes as the penalty which is due to sin; but, sooner or later, in whatever sense, it comes to all. And yet, though suffering is thus universal, no two human beings suffer exactly alike. There is the same individuality in the pain which each man suffers that there is in his thought, in his character, in his countenance. No two men, since the world began, among the millions of sufferers, have repeated exactly the same experience. And this is why human sympathy, even at its best, is never quite perfect. No one merely human being can put himself exactly by that act of the moral imagination which we call sympathy in all the

circumstances of another human being. Each sufferer, whether of bodily or of mental pain, pursues a separate path, encounters peculiar difficulties, shares a common burden, but is alone in his sorrow.

"Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe,
Our hermit spirits dwell and range apart."

And especially was Jesus our Lord solitary in His awful sorrow. We may well believe that the delicate sensibilities of His bodily frame rendered Him liable to physical tortures such as ruder natures can never know. But we know this—that the mode of His death was exceptionally painful, and yet His bodily sufferings were less terrible, so it might seem, than the sufferings of His mind. His agony in the garden was of a character which distances altogether human woe. Our Lord advisedly laid Himself open to the dreadful visitation. He embraced it as by a deliberate act. He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. He took upon Him the burden and the misery of human sin—the sins of all the centuries that had preceded and that would follow Him—that He might take it to the cross and expiate it in death. As the Apostle says, "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." But the touch of this burden which to you and me is so familiar was agony to Him. It drew from Him the bloody sweat which fell from His forehead on the turf of Gethsemane hours before they crowned Him with the thorns or nailed Him to the cross. Ah, brethren, we endeavour to enter into the solitary sorrows of the soul of Jesus, but they are beyond us. We may at some time in our lives have found ourselves in a family circle when a heavy blow had just fallen on it. We may have noted the efforts of the younger children to understand the gloom and the misery of the elders. The elders know what has happened. They know that all that upon which the family depends for daily bread is irretrievably lost; or they know that some loved one—a father, a mother, an eldest child—has just been taken away, it may be by a sudden—by a terrible—catastrophe. They have no heart to speak. Or they know, worst of all, that some misery worse than death—some crushing burden of shame and sorrow—has fallen upon the family through the misconduct of one of its members, and so they sit silent in their grief, and the young children gaze wistfully up into their faces as if trying to make out what is so strange—what is so beyond them,—as if wishing to sympathise with what is to them an incomprehensible woe. They are doing the best—those children. They are concerned at beholding those sorrowing faces. They note those subdued tones—those quiet movements, those hushed sighs—it may be, that darkened room. But, alas! they are trying to understand what they cannot understand. They are touching but the fringes of a sorrow that is altogether above them. And so, brethren, it is with all of us in the presence of the sorrows of Jesus Christ expiating the sins of a guilty world. Before Him we are indeed, the best of us, but children—happy indeed if we share their simple and free sympathies, but, certainly, like them, unable to do more than watch with tender and reverent awe a mighty burden of misery which we cannot hope to comprehend. All that we can do is to lay to heart the words which sound everywhere in believing souls around Gethsemane and Calvary—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow?"

And, lastly, there is the solitude of death. Death, whenever it comes to any man, must be an act in which no other man can share. Even if I die at the same moment with another, I cannot sympathise with him in the act of dying. We have no solid reason to presume that each of us would even be conscious of what is happening to the other. Death strips from

a man all that connects him with that which is without him. It is an act in which his consciousness is, from the nature of the case, thrown back into itself and absorbed in that which is happening to itself. A dying man may be distracted up to the moment, but not in the moment of death. Warm-hearted friends may press around him. Well-remembered faces and objects may pass before his failing eyes. At one death-bed the prayers of childhood—at another (so it has been) soft strains of familiar music—may fall upon his ear. But when the soul, by a wrench which no experience can possibly anticipate, breaks away from the bodily organism with which, since its creation, it has been so intimately linked, it enters upon a lonely path, which may indeed be brightened by the voices and the smiles of angels, but into which no human sympathy can follow. Few things, my brethren, are so tragic as the sharp contrast between the crowd that may surround a dying man, and the necessary solitude of the soul in death. When the cholera, many years ago, struck its victims in a crowded drawing-room abroad, the world was hushed with a passing awe. And the same contrast may be under more accustomed circumstances. What, for instance, can be more pathetic than the deathbed of the French statesman who played so great a part under the republic and the first empire, and who lived down into the boyhood of those among us who are yet in middle life? Talleyrand passed the last forty-eight hours of his life sitting at the side of his bed—he could not bear to lie down—leaning forward on two servants who were relieved, we are told, every two hours. In that posture he received, on the morning of the day on which he died, King Louis Philippe and his Queen, and he never for a moment, we are told, forgot what was due to the etiquette of the court. He received his visitors with the distinction and the attentions to which they were accustomed. Outside his room, in the antechamber, all that was distinguished in the society of Paris was gathered together. Talleyrand's death was viewed as a political and social event of the first importance. Politicians, old and young,—even grey-headed statesmen—crowded the hearth, and talked with animation, while young men and young women exchanged bright compliments with each other, which formed a painful contrast with the deep groans of the dying man in the adjoining room. Talleyrand, who was first a bishop, and then an apostate from Christianity, made some sort of reconciliation with heaven, and God only knows its value. But no sooner had the long agony terminated in death, than, to use the words of the narrative, it might have been supposed that a flight of rooks was leaving the mansion, such was the eagerness with which each visitor rushed away to be the first to tell the news in the particular circle of which he or she was the chosen oracle. The corpse of Talleyrand lying alone in those deserted chambers was a visible emblem of the solitude of the soul in the act of death.

Nor can we refer to such a subject to-day without reminding ourselves that only three days since death has claimed as his own a man whom the Church of England will always honour with affectionate reverence. It is for those who had the happiness of knowing him intimately to say, as no doubt they will say, what Bishop Selwyn was in his private life and conversation, what were the thoughts, what the enthusiasms, that gave impulse and shape to such a splendid life. We who have revered him from afar can merely note that his was a figure of apostolic proportions,—that he was one of that comparatively small band of men who reproduce, in our age of clouded faith and of soul enervation, the manners, the virtues, and the force by which long centuries ago the Christian Church was planted on the ruins of heathendom. Surely, many of us have

accompanied him with the reverent sympathy of our prayers in his last hours of pain and weakness, nor can we doubt that for him the solitude of death has been brightened by all that our gracious Master has in store for those who by their works and their lives turn many to embrace His righteousness, and become the disciples of His truth.

In the death of our Lord Himself it might be supposed that this sense of solitude would be escaped. Living in hourly communion with the Father, surrounded by hosts of angel guardians, how, we may ask, could He taste of the solitude of death? Was not His human nature so united to His Divinity that, even in death, the union was not forfeited? And how is this reconcilable with the supposition that He experienced the loneliness of dying as we men experience it? The answer is that our Lord by a deliberate act became obedient unto death. Whatever might have been the law of His being, as a sinless man united to a higher nature, He did not, if I may dare so to say, claim its privileges, but laid Himself open without reserve or stint to all the ills to which our flesh is heir, without at all escaping its lowest and its last humiliations. He selected as the mode of dying that which conspicuously involved most pain and shame, and He would not, most assuredly, defeat His purpose by sparing Himself that accompaniment of death which causes so much apprehension to us sinful men—its solitariness. He might have prayed His Father for twelve legions of angels, but He would not be alone. He might have enjoyed unceasingly the joy, at least, of those who always behold the face of the Father in heaven. He willed to share the misery of the souls who cry in their last moments—some, we may be sure, every day that passes—“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” He submitted Himself to all those elements of our nature which sterner characters affect to scorn—to its sense of dependence—to its craving for sympathy—to its consciousness of weakness. “Oh, go not far from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me,” is the natural language of the feeblest sufferer in the poorest and most wretched lodging in London; but it was the language also of our Divine Saviour, contemplating, with a true human apprehension, the loneliness of approaching death. Yes, when as on this day He rode in triumph towards the holy city, surrounded by a great multitude, who cried, “Hosanna!”—who spread the branches of the palms and the garments which they wore along the path of His advance—even at this moment of His seeming triumph He was really alone. He knew what was before Him. The surging multitude around Him was for Him as if it was not. We may see men in Cheapside, in the middle of the day, when it is difficult to force a passage along the footway from this Cathedral to the Bank—we may see men in whose faces some unconcealed care, some absorbing passion, proclaims their virtual solitude amid the crowd. “Never less alone than when most alone,” is the motto of the soul as it gazes upwards towards the heavens. “Never more alone than when least alone,” is the motto of the soul, when, under a great stress of pain or doubt, it looks downwards to the earth. The crowds which sang, “Hosanna!” as Christ entered Jerusalem, and the crowds which cried, “Crucify Him,” as He passed along the way of sorrows, touched but the surface of His awful solitude, as He rode on—as He walked on—to die.

Surely, my brethren, this solitude of our Saviour in His sufferings is full of great comfort for us. It shows to us, first, that at the moment of death, and before it, the best Christians may experience a desolation of spirit, which is no real test of their true condition before God. Many of the best men in the Christian Church have done so, and it has been supposed

by those who do not reflect sufficiently upon the teaching of the Passion that this desolation of the soul must needs imply its rejection by the good God. No conclusion can be less warranted. The confident assumptions of a death-bed which follows upon a life of disloyalty to known truth and known duty may be—I do not say that they always are—God forbid—they may be only physical illusions ; but the anguish of a saintly soul which fears on the threshold of eternity that God has left it to itself is, surely, a token of its conformity to the Divine Saviour.

And, secondly, we see in the solitude of Jesus crucified a warrant of His constant sympathy with the dying. “In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” Nothing that we may experience in His gracious providence—no anguish of soul—no weariness or torture of body—has been unexplored by Him Who overcame all the sharpness of death, before He opened the kingdom of heaven to the great company of the faithful.

May He take pity upon us as sinful and erring, yet believing children, and suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Him. May He look upon us with the eyes of His mercy, and give us comfort and sure confidence in Him, and defend us from the dangers of the enemy, and so bring us safely to our eternal home, for His Own infinite merits.

"THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE."

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 21ST, 1878.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."—PSALM cxviii. 24.

WHAT is the exact day to which the author of this Psalm refers? My brethren, it is hard to say—at least, with certainty. Possibly it was the day on which the foundation-stone of the new temple was laid after the return from Babylon. Probably it was the day on which this temple was consecrated to the service of God. Less probably it was the Feast of Tabernacles. In any case, it was a great historical occasion, or it was a festival of the first class of importance. Now, in our Lord's time, the whole of the 118th Psalm was applied without any kind of doubt to the Messiah by the Jewish interpreters. He was the stone refused by the builders of Israel, Who afterwards was made the head of the corner. His was the welcome—"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." To Him was the prayer addressed, "Hosanna, save, I pray," as on Palm Sunday, by a Jewish multitude. And thus it was perfectly natural for the early Christian Church to find in the words, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it," some application to the life of Jesus Christ. What was the day in His life which He made His own beyond all others? Not His birthday, for that meant His entrance on a life of woe. Not His ascension day, for that was the closing scene of a triumph already achieved. Not His transfiguration day—it was a momentary flash of glory in a life of pain. Not the day of His crucifixion—it was a great day indeed for a ruined world, but for Him it marked the last stage of humiliation and of woe. The day of days in the life of

Christ was the day of His resurrection. It reflected a new glory on the day of His birth. It witnessed a triumph of which the ascension was but a completion. It was to the transfiguration what the sunrise is to the earliest dawn. It poured a flood of light and meaning on Calvary itself. It showed that what took place there was not simply the death scene of an innocent sufferer, but a sacrifice which would have power with God to the end of time.

Something of this kind is what was felt by the first Christians about Easter day ; and, as it was the greatest day in the life of Jesus Christ, so for them it was the greatest day in the whole year. It was the day of days. It was the Lord's own day. It was the queen of festivals. Every Lord's day in the year was a weekly feast of Christ's rising from the dead. On Easter day the force and meaning of all these Lord's days was gathered into one consummate expression of joy and praise—"This is the day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." Easter should provoke a joy in Christian hearts greater than any event in our private lives—greater than any in the world's public history—greater than any other even in the life of our Lord Himself. This is the immemorial feeling and sense of Christendom. But why should it be so ? Why has Easter—why has the resurrection—this extraordinary claim on the buoyancy of the Christian heart ?

The joy of Easter, then first of all, is the joy of a great reaction—a reaction from anxiety and sorrow. So it was at the time of Christ's resurrection. The Apostles had been crushed by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. They could not have imagined beforehand that One so popular, so powerful, so gifted, so good, would die like a malefactor amid the execrations of the populace, and be buried away out of sight. They had trusted that it had been He Who should have redeemed Israel. Their disappointment, their despondency, their anguish, were exactly proportioned to their earlier hopes, and, as is always the case in the life of feeling, one deep feeling answered to another. When He was in His grave all seemed over, and when He appeared first to one and then to another on the day of His resurrection they could not keep their feelings of welcome and delight, traversed though these were by a sense of wondering awe, within anything like bounds. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

It is not often, brethren, that we are able, even distantly, to picture to ourselves that joy which then must have been theirs ; but let us try to do so by imagining a case which may easily suggest itself to us just now. Let us suppose, if it were consistent with the present will of God, that any of those brave men who sank beneath the waves just a month ago in the *Enrydice* could, instead of waiting for the general resurrection, rise now from their watery shrouds—could enter the homes of the families which were awaiting their return, and which are now plunged in sorrow—could speak to a wife, to a mother, to a sister, some words of reassurance and peace. What, think you, would be the measure of the joy of such a meeting as that ? It would be exactly proportioned to the anguish which followed the

first announcement that the vessel had been lost, and that has continued, or deepened, ever since. It would be an exulting rebound of the feeling to which nothing in ordinary life is at all parallel ; yet it would be only a distant likeness of the joy which the Apostles experienced on Easter day. No sailor who is now mourned among the brave men who died on that Sunday afternoon can have been to those who mourn him what Jesus was to the twelve, or to the Marys, or to His own mother. They knew that He had died by a death of studied pain and shame, to which nothing in the sudden sinking of a vessel at sea is in any way comparable. Their joy at seeing Him corresponded to the agony which had preceded it. The rebound was proportioned to the recoil. For them, assuredly, in the words which the Church applies to Easter—“The winter is past : the rain is over, and again the flowers appear upon the earth. The time of the singing of birds is come.” Nature in her yearly resurrection from the grave of winter might fitly reflect the exulting joy with which nature’s Lord was greeted by His first servants on His return from the realms of death. And this joy of the first disciples is repeated every year in the heart of the Christian Church. Those who have felt the sorrow feel also the joy. Those who have entered into Christ’s sufferings, and into their own sins as the cause of His sufferings, can rise with glad hearts, I do not say to the heights of apostolic exultation, but, certainly, to the level of a tranquil delight which offers now to our risen Saviour a sincere greeting on His day of resurrection. Year by year we Christians accompany our Lord, as it were, over again to the garden of the agony, to the hall of judgment, to the way of sorrows, to the hill of the crucifixion. Year by year we stand by in spirit while Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus lay Him in His grave, and the tension of sincere feeling, of sympathetic sorrow, of penitent and contrite hearts which this implies, is followed by a corresponding reaction on Easter morning. Yes, across the interval of eighteen centuries we rejoice over again, in our poor way, with the company of the first disciples. We say to ourselves, over again and again, without comprehending all its meaning—“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.” We lay ourselves open to the strong impulse of reactionary delight which has followed upon the desolation and the misery, and we cry, “This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

And the joy of Easter, secondly, is the joy of a great certainty. The resurrection of our Saviour is the fact which makes an intelligent Christian certain of the truth of His creed. And in this way it satisfies a great mental want, and it occasions keen enjoyment by giving this particular satisfaction ; for the human mind, my brethren, has its joys no less than the human heart. The human mind craves for truth no less truly than does the human heart for an object of affection, or than the human body for its accustomed nourishment. In debased natures this appetite for truth may have been killed out, but in every healthy mind, whether Christian or not, it is a lasting, and, I may add, in some sense, it is an insatiable appetite—insatiable because its only adequate object is an infinite being. Well, this appetite for truth demands, first of all, an answer to

those questions of the very first importance to every thinking man—"Whence do I come? Why am I here? What is the destiny, if any, which awaits me after death?" Christ our Lord has answered those questions. He has told us authoritatively what is the true origin, what is the work, what is the destiny of our being. But when the question occurs—How are we to know that He really had authority to teach as He did on these great subjects, and to point to Himself, as He did point, as their true solution? He may have it, we say, but what is the proof to us? What is the fact about Him upon which we can lay our fingers and say that it proves His right to speak as He did? And the answer is—He was crucified, dead, and buried, and then He rose again the third day from the dead. He had said that He would rise, and He did rise. He had pointed to this coming resurrection when the Jews asked Him for a sign of His mission. The old Hebrew prophet, He said, had been three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. The Son of man to Whom this prophet, and all else that was noble and great in Israel, pointed onwards.—He, too, would be three days in the heart of the earth. His resurrection would prove His right to speak for God—to speak as compelling the allegiance of man—to speak as the organ of the highest truth on the highest subjects that could interest human beings. And the Apostles accordingly entered on their work with one conviction prominent beyond all others. It was that the truth of Christianity and its claims upon the minds and hearts of men depend upon the literal truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Within a few weeks of the occurrence, and amidst a population passionately interested in denying the truth of what the Apostle said, they took every opportunity of saying virtually, "Christianity is true. It is true, because Christ has risen from death." They could not have ventured to do this unless they had been sure of the fact upon which they were so ready to stake everything, even life itself—sure with that sort of practical certainty which comes from actual experience. On every occasion, with almost every opponent, in almost every sermon, they put forth the resurrection as their reason for being what they were, and for saying what they did. Read the first chapters of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. See how their first discourses were full of the resurrection—how they preached it as the sum and substance of the Gospel, almost as if it were the whole of the Christian creed. So did Peter in Jerusalem; so did Paul in Antioch, in Corinth, in Athens. For these men the resurrection was, practically, Christianity—the whole of Christianity, in so far as Christianity, as the whole, rested on it as the proof-fact of its having come from heaven. It was this fact which showed that the Gospel was not one creed among many, all having some truth and some falsehood in their composition, but that it was *the* truth—the one absolute truth—the real unveiling of the mind of God to His reasonable and immortal creatures.

This is what the first Christians felt of the truth of their faith. God had given an assurance unto all men in that He had raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore did the resurrection inspire them with this fervent joy.

It was *the* fact which riveted their grasp on the truth which they prized above all else in life. Without the resurrection what was Christianity? Possibly a beautiful thought. Possibly a new and fresh life of feeling—a social enterprise for improving the race—a passionate regret for a departed friend—the highest love of our human kind—the enthusiasm of humanity. Without the resurrection what was Christianity? A human system, or at least a system uncriticized by God, destined, like other human systems, to have its day—its day, perchance, of ascendancy, but also its day of decline,—destined to die away and to cease to be. Without the resurrection what was Christianity? On the whole—we must say it—a failure. Had Jesus been crucified, buried, and then subjected to the decay of death, His human life would have been—again we must dare to say it—a splendid mistake. His miracles would have been reckoned for successful jugglery. His strongest claims on the love and allegiance of man would have been resented as the language of presumptuous self-assertion. His clearest predictions about Himself would have been set aside as the reveries of a dreamer. His death, if men still held it wholly undeserved, would have only illustrated the triumph of might over a cause that was partly right. His bones might, perchance, have been gathered by a distant generation, and reverently laid up in a shrine more magnificent than any which have covered the relics of some who have owned His name; but still His Apostle would have written, “If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain; your faith is also vain.” Other miracles might have been conceivably omitted. Christianity might still have been Christianity if the five thousand had not been fed, if the demoniacs had not been cured, if Lazarus had not been raised from death; but deny a literal resurrection of Jesus from the grave, and you take the spring out of the year; you remove the keystone from the arch. All else in our creed depends on the resurrection of Christ. And to-day, when we remind ourselves of its historical certainty, a certainty scarcely less illustrated by the apparent contradictions than by the collective and direct force of the accounts of it which have come down to us, we experience a mental delight at the freshening touch of truth, and we say, “This is the day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

And, thirdly, the joy of Easter is inspired by the hope which Easter warrants and quickens. Hope and joy are twin sisters. Hope best enters the human soul when she is leaning on the arm of joy. As the Apostle says, “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” What is this hope which Easter most distinctly puts before us? How does it spring from our Saviour’s resurrection?

The hope which Easter sets before us is the completeness of our life after death. If Christ had never risen from the dead, there still would have been much to urge, on grounds of natural reason, in favour of the immortality of the human soul. Great thinkers who were not Christians have done this. And we, with the light of faith streaming on us as from Heaven, may well pronounce their names with affectionate reverence. But, after all, what is the net result of their efforts? Does it approach

the confines of certainty? Is it anything better than a highly reasonable anticipation? And even if the immortality of the soul were certain, would it assure us of enjoying hereafter more than a mutilated existence,—the existence of a soul divided from that body which has been for so many years its companion and its instrument,—with which, since the very moment of its creation, its every act has been so intimately associated? The Jews themselves felt that immortality must be something more than the immortality of the soul. In their later history, as notably in the Maccabee period, they had a certain faith in the resurrection of the body; but this faith was confined to sects and to places. It was perhaps upon the whole less of a faith than a notion. When our Lord came the complete future life of man was revealed by Him, by His treating it as a matter of course. Our Lord referred to it just as He referred to the objects around Him, as a thing obvious to any soul that had eyes to see. Sometimes under figures, sometimes literally, He treated the future life as a continuous life which men lead here and now. The very furniture and plan of Heaven, its many mansions, the thrones on which the disciples would sit, the effulgence of the blessed, the new fellowship in which men and women would consort, while yet neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but being as the angels of God, the presence of the venerable patriarchs living on from age to age because God is their God, and He is not, forsooth, the God of the dead, but of the living—in one way or another the subject was constantly on His lips. And especially and most solemnly did He insist that all in the graves would one day hear the voice of the Son of man and would come forth. Man's future life would be the life of man—of a being consisting of body and soul—of a body, no doubt, spiritualised, penetrated, invigorated by new properties; but still a body continuing under whatever new conditions the life which it had lived on earth. Now, how was this teaching to be brought home to the minds of men as being something more than a religious fancy—as being a literal and solemn truth? Brethren, if we men were to be convinced of the reality of the future life, it was necessary to grapple with the main difficulty which we have in treating it as being what it is—a certainty. That difficulty, as I have already hinted, is not suggested to us by our reason. Reason left to itself—reason deliberately examining the powers and instincts of the human mind—always has leant upon the whole—always will lean—to the side of a belief in some kind of future after death. In all ages of the world the best men in their best moments have believed in their immortality, and the difficulty of believing in a future life is due, not to the reason, but to the imagination as controlled by the senses. Who of us has not felt this for himself in some one of those darks hours which, sooner or later, fall on every human life? Who of us has not stood by the open coffin and felt himself, or marked how others can feel, the terrific empire of sense in the presence of death? The form which was once full of life, quivering with expressiveness, with thought, with feeling, lies there cold, motionless, before us, as if it were but plaster cast of its former self. And, perhaps,

already the traces of what must surely follow are discernible, and forthwith the imagination surrenders itself like a docile pupil to the guidance of the senses. It follows the corpse into the grave which awaits it. It pictures to itself the gradual advances of an inevitable decay. It ponders over the very chemistry of dissolution. It dwells with a passionate but misplaced sympathy on the surrender, first of this and then of that feature of the departed, so well loved in life, to the gnawing agencies of decomposition and ruin. It lives—this imagination—not merely like that demoniac whom our Lord exercised—among the tombs: it lives inside them. And it ends by proclaiming the victory of death,—a victory too clear, too complete, too unquestionable, to allow reason or revelation to raise their voices in favour of any sort of life that can possibly survive it. For the moment the most modest anticipations of reason are but as an unsubstantial guess. For the moment the clear teaching of revelation is as a solemn and portentous fancy. For the moment the imagination and the senses rule, and they decide that all ends with death, and that the earthly secrets of the grave are the measure of man's impotent aspirations after a future existence. Now, it was to deal with this specific difficulty that our Lord willed first to die, and then, by a literal bodily resurrection, to rise from the grave. He would grapple with the imperious urgency of the senses and the imagination on their own ground. He would beat down by an act palpable to the senses, and attested by a body of evidence which should warrant its reality for all coming time, the tyrant power which sought to shut out from man the hope of an immortal life. When the Apostles saw the risen Being before them as their Lord,—when they noted His pierced hands, His feet, His side, His well-remembered form and features,—when they conversed with Him, ate with Him, listened to Him, followed Him just as of old, then they knew that the very frame of Jesus, killed upon the cross by a protracted agony, committed to the grave as a bleeding and mangled corpse, had really risen from death—had opened a new era of hope for the human race. And for us in a distant age, this fact that Christ rose from death is not less full of precious hope and joy than for our first fathers in the faith. In our day there has been, I may say, another sort of resurrection—a resurrection of doubt; and the gloomy uncertainties about the future, which were dissipated by Christ, again threaten to overshadow sections of Christendom with little less than a pagan darkness. But while negative speculation is ever active, the broad facts of human life remain what they always have been and what they always will be. Year by year, month by month, death claims its victims from every household. Science and thought, it may be very reluctantly, bow their heads at the presence of death. They confess His power: they can suggest nothing to relieve the gloom which surrounds His empire. Only beside the empty tomb of the risen Jesus can this generation, or those who will succeed us, recover any true hope for the larger destinies of man, for “Christ is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that sleep, for, since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead,

“THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE.”

for, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” It is this invigorating, this joyous hope which Easter bestows on us. Unbelief once traced over the gate of a cemetery the word “*Fuerunt*,”—“They have been.” Faith always writes over the gate of a churchyard “I am the resurrection and the life.” To unbelief the dead are the memories of beings who have ceased to be. To faith the dead are living, working, it may be praying, friends whom nothing but the dulness of sense hides from sight. They are not yet what they will be, but they are there.

“The dead they have become
Like guardian angels to us,
And distant heaven, like home,
Through them begins to woo us.
Love that was earthly wings
Its flight to holier places.
The dead are sacred things
That multiply our graces.”

The resurrection of Christ has done its work. It has quickened our perceptions of the unseen and of the future. The hope of meeting those whom we have loved and lost,—of renewing in a brighter atmosphere all that was worth keeping in the intercourse of this earthly life,—above all, the hope of seeing and being welcomed by Him, their Lord and ours, Who, in His human body is set at God’s right hand in Heavenly places,—this glorious, this most inspiring hope, springs directly from Easter day, and we may exclaim with the Apostle that God has “begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” and with the psalmist that “This is the day which the Lord hath made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Yes, Easter day is not a day for protracted argument: it is a day for Christian joy. Of this joy, my brethren, the outward signs are around us. Nature and art are here. The flowers from the garden, the music of the choir, each contribute their best to the honour of our risen Lord. May He grant that these outward things may be in keeping with something like the inward experience. The reality of a man’s Easter joy is a fair test of his Christian sincerity. If we have felt sympathy with Christ in His sufferings, we must rejoice at the triumph which has ended them. If we do account our Christian faith as indeed the pearl of great price we must rejoice at the event which, more than any other, demonstrates its value. If we have staked our all or even something less than our all upon the blessed eternal future, then our hearts must indeed bound with delight at the memory of that majestic fact which shows that we have not been wasting our efforts on an unsubstantial fancy.

May Christ our Lord vouchsafe to deepen in each one of us this joy in His blessed resurrection,—to give it more and more a practical expression in our life,—to satisfy it perfectly hereafter in that world where, through His death and His rising from death, we shall be, we trust, like Him, and we shall see Him as He is.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 28TH, 1878.

"And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest."—EZEK. xxxvii. 3.

THOSE who have read the prophet Ezekiel—and he is, perhaps, less read than any other book in the Old Testament—will remember this vision of the dry bones. Like many other visions, before and since, it was partly shaped by the circumstances of the times. The horrors of the Chaldean invasion, which had resulted in the carrying away of the Jewish people into Babylon, were still fresh in the memories of men. In many a valley, on many a hill side, in southern Palestine, the track of the invading army, as it advanced and retired, would have been marked by the bones of the unoffending but slaughtered peasantry. In his work on Nineveh, written some years ago, Mr. Layard has described such a scene in Armenia—an upland valley covered by the bones of a Christian population which had been plundered and murdered by the Kurds. Such a scene may well have suggested to Ezekiel the background of the vision which the prophetic spirit so shaped as to express a truth which Israel needed to know. Ezekiel, rapt in a spiritual ecstasy, was set down in the midst of a valley that was full of bones. He was caused to pass by them round about. He marked their great number: he marked their dryness. They were the bones of a multitude of men who had been slain long since. He was asked by the Divine Being with Whom he was the while in close communion, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel knew that nothing was impossible with God. He knew, too, that what was possible might be forbidden by necessities, by laws, of which he knew nothing, and he reverently answered, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." And forthwith he was made the instrument through which the question, which had been

put to him, was answered. "He said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones—Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." And then Ezekiel continues—"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them." That was the first stage of the revival. It was still incomplete. Something more was needed—something which the prophet goes on to describe. "Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the breath," or spirit: "Prophesy, son of man, and say to the spirit, Come from the four winds, O spirit, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." And then he continues, "So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." That was the second stage of the revival. And it is followed by an explanation of the purpose of the vision. But let us at this point ask ourselves the question—What are we to understand by the dry bones of the vision of Ezekiel?

The dry bones of Ezekiel's vision are, doubtless, to begin with, the bones of human bodies—bones from which the flesh had been either stripped or decayed away through exposure to the air. Ezekiel beholds a shaking—a coming together of these bones. He sees them again clothed with flesh and sinews, and, finally, the breath comes into them and they live. They stand on their feet.

This is plainly the picture of a resurrection—not, indeed, of the general resurrection, because what Ezekiel saw was, clearly, limited and local, but, at the same time, it is a sample of what will occur at the general resurrection. And on this ground the passage is read by the Church as a Proper Lesson on Easter Tuesday. It may be urged that this representation is presently explained to refer to something quite distinct—namely, the restoration of the Jewish people from Babylon, and, therefore, that what passed before the prophet's eyes need not have been regarded by him as more than an imaginary or even impossible occurrence intended to symbolise the coming event. But if this was the case, the vision, it must be said, was very ill adapted for its proposed purpose. The idea of a restoration from Babylon was, humanly speaking—was, politically speaking—sufficiently improbable already without heightening this existing improbability by what is thus supposed to have been a greater improbability still. Men do not learn to accept difficult or unfamiliar truth through the assistance of truth still more unfamiliar—still more difficult. The fact is, that the form of Ezekiel's vision and the popular use which Ezekiel made of it shows, that at this date, the idea of the resurrection of the body cannot have been a strange one to religious Jews. Had it been so, Ezekiel's vision would have been turned against himself. The restoration from the captivity would have been thought more improbable than ever, if the measure of its probability was to be found in a doctrine unheard of as yet by the people of revelation. We know, in fact, from their own Scriptures, that the Jews had had, for many a century, glimpses, more or less distinct, of this truth. Long ago the mother of Samuel could sing that the Lord bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; and Job could be sure that though worms destroyed his body yet in his flesh he would see God; and David, speak-

ing for a higher being than himself, yet knows that God will not leave the soul in hell or suffer His Holy One to see corruption; and Daniel, Ezekiel's contemporary, or nearly so, foresees that many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And later on the courageous mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs cries to her dying son—"The Creator of the world Who formed all the generations of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also in His mercy give you life and breath again if you regard not yourselves for His law's sake." Undoubtedly, there was among the Jews a certain belief in the resurrection of the body, a belief which this very vision must have at once represented and confirmed. Men shrink from admitting the idea that there will be a resurrection of the dead, on the ground, mainly, that it involves an exertion of Divine power to which nothing exactly corresponds within the range of every day experience. Whether it is quite wise to make the range of our experience a measure of what God can do, may be more than questionable. But, at least, the doctrine of the resurrection of all men from the dead involves no greater difficulty for a thoughtful man than that which he already encounters if he believes seriously in God at all, for belief in God involves, as a necessary part of itself, a belief in the Creation of the universe out of nothing. However you may multiply the centuries during which man is supposed to have existed on the surface of this planet—however vast may be the tracts of time which you may demand as theoretically necessary to fill up the interval between some primary chaos and man's first appearance on the scene—say what you will about the date of the solar system or of the fixed stars, or of the presumable history of their evolution—still in the last resort, in the rear of all these theories amid which the scientific imagination may run such splendid riot, the question of questions awaits you. It cannot be ignored; it cannot be eluded—How did the original matter out of which all that we see around us itself take shape? How did this originally come to be? That is the question into which all others ultimately resolve themselves, and upon the answer which is given to it depends no less an issue than belief or disbelief in the existence of God; for if you say that original, unformed, unevolved matter always existed, then you deny the existence of the Being Whom we call God. God—He is nothing if He is not the alone everlasting,—if He is not the Source of all else that is,—if He is not in His essence altogether spiritual, immaterial. If there existed from everlasting side by side with God a something which you call matter which was not Himself—which was in its essence distinct from Himself—which did not owe its existence to Him, and which as being itself presumably eternal, contradicts the first law of His being as the Source of all that is besides Himself, then God the Creator of all things has no existence. But if, having on independent grounds a clear and strong belief in God, you deny, as you must deny, the eternity of matter, then you must trace the origin of the raw material out of which this universe has been fashioned, in whatever way, back to God. How did it come from Him? If it escaped from Him—and what would be this escape of matter from the immaterial—if it escaped from Him without, or against, His will, then He is no longer master—not merely in His creation but of Himself. Being God He must have summoned it into being by a free act of His free will. There was nothing out of which to frame it, and, therefore, He must have summoned it out of nothing. There was vacancy, and He bade the rude elements of matter to begin to be. It was something to fashion man out of the existing dust of the earth, but to give existence

to the dust of the earth when, as yet, there was nothing, was an infinitely higher exercise of power. Think, my brethren, what this means—creation out of nothing—that act with which every thinking and sincere believer in God must necessarily credit Him, and then compare it with the relatively puny difficulties which we are told ought to arrest the hand of the great Creator on the day of the general resurrection. It is not for us to trace His methods of procedure by audacious guesses, or to say how He will restore to each human body such of its proper materials as may have drifted away into subtle connections with other forms; but this I take it as certain to any reasonable man—that no difficulties about the resurrection of the body can seriously suspend our belief in it, if we do believe already in God as really God, that is, as the Creator, and believe further that He has told us that He will one day raise the bodies of all men from the dead.

Ezekiel's vision, then, may remind us of what Christ our Lord has taught us again and again in His own words of the resurrection of the body; but its teaching by no means ends with this, for the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision may well represent the lifeless condition of societies of men at particular times in their history—the condition of nations, of Churches, of less important institutions. Indeed, Ezekiel, as we have seen, was left in no kind of doubt about the divinely intended mission of his vision. The dry bones were a picture of what the Jewish nation believed itself to be as a consequence of the captivity in Babylon. All that was left of it could be best compared to the bones of the Jews who had been massacred by the Chaldean invader, and which bleached on the hill sides of Palestine. "He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the house of Israel. Behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost. As for us we are cut off." Certainly, in the captivity little was left to Israel beyond a skeleton of its former self. There were the sacred books; there were royal descendants of the race of David; there were priests; there were prophets; there was the old Hebrew and sacred language not yet wholly corrupted into Chaldean; there were the precious and loved traditions of the past great days of Jerusalem. These were the dry bones of what had been Israel. There was nothing to connect them. They lay on the soil of heathenism. They lay apart from each other as if quite unconnected: nay, rather—for the form of the representation changes as the explanation succeeds the vision—they now lay buried beneath the soil—beneath the thick layer of pagan life, of pagan worship, of pagan oppression, of pagan vice, which buried them out of sight. To the captive people, Babylon was not merely a valley of dry bones—a social and political neighbourhood which was fatal to the corporate life of Israel as the people of revelation: Babylon was a grave. And accordingly, the prophet was desired to address his countrymen—"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and caused you to come up out of your graves." And this is what really did happen at the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. Each of the promises in Ezekiel's vision was fulfilled. First, the Divine breath came upon the bones and they lived. The remains of the past of Israel—its sacred books, its priests, its prophets, its laws, its great traditions, its splendid hopes—these once more moved in the soul of the nation. As if with the motion of reviving life, they came together. They were readjusted into an harmonious whole. They received the clothing of bone and sinew which originally belonged

to them. And the nation thus reconstructed in the days of its captivity was lifted, by the Divine power, when the moment came, out of the grave, and restored to the upper air of its ancient home in Palestine. It was a wonderful restoration, almost, if not altogether, unique in history. We see it in progress in such a psalm as the 119th, which, doubtless, belongs to this very period, and which exhibits the upward struggles of a sincere and dutiful soul at the first dawn of the national restoration; and we read of its completion in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was completed when the temple, the centre of the spiritual and national life, was fully rebuilt, and when the old life of the people in its completeness was thus renewed upon the spot which had been the home of their fathers from generation to generation.

And something of the same kind has been seen in portions of the Christian Church. As a whole we know the Church of Christ cannot fail; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; but particular Churches may fail in very different degrees. National Churches, provincial Churches, local Churches—these, like the Seven Churches in Asia, which stand as a warning for all the ages of Christendom, may experience very varying degrees of corruption, of ruin, and of the moral insensibility which precedes death. So it was with the Church of Rome, so long ago, even, as in the tenth century. Those who know the history of that century know that no man could ever have violated the spirit and the law of Christ more flagrantly than did the rulers of the Roman Church in that dark and miserable age, and yet this age was succeeded by a striking moral and religious restoration. And so it has been, although in a somewhat different sense, with the Church of England, and more than once since the Reformation. During the past week we may have seen in the public prints accounts of the completion of a new college at one of our Universities, which has been erected on a more splendid scale than anything of the kind in England, for, at least, two hundred years. What has been the motive for this enterprise? This college bears the name of a quiet, country clergyman whom, during his lifetime, nobody in authority thought worthy of patronage or notice. After a short career at his University he died at a country parsonage. And it may well be asked, What was the work which has earned for him, at the hands of his fellow-churchmen, this unprecedented distinction after his death? The answer is that, when John Keble entered on the work of his life, the Church of England was, to a considerable extent, in a condition which answered to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. She had succeeded to a splendid inheritance, but she understood her privileges very imperfectly. By large numbers of her people, the higher, nobler sides of the Christian life—its pathos, its awfulness, its risks, its strength, its capacities for heroism, its capacities for sacrifice, its secret powers derived from communion with the unseen, its magnificent prospects which dwarf down into insignificance all that merely meets the eye of sense—this had been forgotten. For them the kingdom of heaven had come to be almost as one of the kingdoms of this world. The episcopate was merely the form of Church government approved of by the state in this part of the empire. The sacraments were old ceremonies pleasing to the religious sentiment, but very far, indeed, from being necessary to salvation. The Bible was a venerable Book—the most venerable of books—but nobody knew exactly what criticism would presently say of it; and, as for the Prayer Book, it was described as a human compilation just three hundred years old. Think of the case of a soul which might hope, from the echoes of the Gospel resounding down the centuries, that a home had been found for it on earth

—a home in which its sorrows might be consoled and its aspirations encouraged, and then wending its way into a Church which had so largely forgotten its first love as this! There are those still living who can say what has happened to such souls in that dreary period; but it was the high privilege of the man whom we are thinking of, more, perhaps, than than of any other man, to bring the remedy. Not from any position which of itself commanded attention, but as relying on the native force and beauty and majesty of truth, he published a collection of poems, unwillingly enough, which has had more effect than a thousand volumes of more pretentious character. No one could think less highly of the "Christian Year" than did its humble-minded author, and it was, in the judgment of very competent judges, inferior as poetry to other works of his pen. It was merely fugitive. It was careless of finish and of symmetry. It was indistinct. It was hard to be understood by those who had not the key to understand it. It was eminently a book which was not made, but which grew and was marked with the rude irregularities of growth as distinct from the polish and the finish of mere manufacture. But underneath its language—above and beyond its literary faults whatever they were—there was a subtle, fine, penetrative,—I may dare to say, a Divine,—spirit, which belonged to religious genius of the very highest order, and which has renewed the faith of the Church of England. It breathed through this book upon the dry bones around it. It clothed once more the chief pastors of the Church in the garb of Apostles. It traced beneath the form of the sacraments the inward grace which unites with Christ. It supplied a point of view for reading the sacred Scriptures intelligently, and yet as an inspired whole, and with a constant sense of their profound, their unfathomable meaning. It lighted up the Prayer Book as a beautiful relic of the best work of the Primitive Church, upon which the sixteenth century, while removing blemishes and corruptions, has, after all, only lightly laid its hand. It did this after such a fashion that at last we understand it. Even yet we are too near the date of the publication of this book to take an accurate measure of all that it has done for the English Church, but we can see enough to be sure that through it breathed the breath of heaven by which dying Churches are renewed,—by which the dry bones of past ages of faith and love are again clothed upon with the substance of life.

And some of us may have noted a little resurrection in some institution, neither as divine as a Church nor yet so broad, so inclusive, as a nation—in a school, a college, a hospital, a charitable guild, a company. It is the creation—it is the relic—of a distant age. It is magnificent in its picturesqueness. It lacks, alas! nothing but life. It treasures up statutes which are no longer observed. It observes ceremonies and customs which have lost their meaning. It stoutly upholds a phraseology and livery which tell of a past time, and of which the object has been forgotten. On certain days in the year its members meet. They go through the accustomed usages. They signalise their meeting, it may be, by a splendid banquet—by commanding oratory; but in their heart of hearts they know well that they are meeting in a valley of dry bones. The old rules, usages, phrases, dresses—these are scattered around them like the bones in the valley of Ezekiel's vision. The life which once animated and clothed them has long since perished away. They lie apart without connection with each other—without attempt at arrangement—without the decencies of order; and the question is, "Who shall bring them together? Who shall restore to them movement and power? Who shall clothe them with flesh and blood, and make them once more what they were meant to

be?" And on such occasions there are always those who would cry with a modern prophet of despair—

"Poor fragments of a broken world
Whereon men pitch'd their tent,
Why were ye, too, to death not hurl'd,
When your world's day was spent?
That glow of central fire is done,
Which, with its fusing flame,
Knit all your hearts and kept in one;
But ye—ye are the same."

But we can think, it may be, of cases where a nobler spirit than this has prevailed—where a man has appeared, who, instead of contemptuously sweeping away what the past has left, sets himself to gather, to arrange, to combine—if it may be, to reconstruct—sets himself, above all, to invoke that Divine Spirit of life and grace Who alone can restore life to the dead and inaugurate a moral and social resurrection. Before he began his work the thought came to him too—"Can these bones live?" But believing that resurrection is the will of God, the Author of life, whether moral or physical, he went forward. It was enough for him to say, "O Lord, Thou knowest." And he heard, not long after, the Divine command, "Son of man, prophesy unto the breath, and say, O breath, come unto these bones that they may live."

And, lastly, the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision may be discovered, and that not seldom within the human soul. When a soul has lost its hold on truth or grace—when it has ceased to believe, or ceased to love, all the traces of what it once has been do not forthwith disappear. There are survivals of the old believing life—fragments of the skeleton of the old convictions—bits of stray logic which once guarded a creed—phrases which expressed the feeling which once winged a prayer. There may remain on in the arid desolation a very valley full of dry bones—of aspirations which have no goal; of opinions which have no real basis—no practical consequences; of friendships which are felt to be hollow, but which are still kept up; of habits which have lost all meaning but which it is hard to surrender. Not seldom may we meet with writers and with talkers, with historians, with poets, whose language shows that they have once known what it is to believe, but for whom a living faith has perished utterly, and left behind it only these dried-up relics of its former life. Such a case—it may be, partially at least, that of some who hear me—such a case must suggest the solemn question, Can these bones live? Can these phrases, these forms, these habits, these associations which once were part of a spirit's life—can they ever again become what they were? Is it worth while to treasure them? Were it not better—were it not more sincere—to have done with them altogether—to disavow what we no longer mean—to abandon habits of devotion which have become for us only forms—to break with practices of piety, of benevolence, which are only due now to the surviving impetus of habits? Why should the soul be thus a charnel house of the past? Why not clear it out and begin afresh with some such new life as may yet be possible? Brethren, it is better, believe me, to respect the dry bones though they are only dry bones. They have their value in that they witness to a living past. They have their value in that they point on to a possible restoration in the future. On them, too, the breath of God may light. Into them may yet be infused a new, quickening force. It is easy enough to decry religious habit as only habit—as motiveless, soulless, unaccepted service. Doubtless, habit which is only habit is not life, but it is better, I dare to say, than nothing at all

—better if not in itself, yet, surely for the sake of that which it may lead on to. A man may have ceased to mean his prayers. His prayers may now be but the dry bones of that warm and living communion which he once held with God ; but do not let him, on that account, give them up. Do not let him break with the little that remains of what once was life. It is easy to decry habit, but habit may be the scaffolding which saves us from a great fall. Habit may be the arch which bridges over a chasm that yawns between one height and another on our upward road. Habit without motive is sufficiently unsatisfactory, but habit is better, better far than nothing.

Some of us, it may be, surveying the shrivelled elements of our religious life cannot avoid the question which is borne in upon us from heaven—“Can these bones live?” They seem to us in our best moments so hopelessly dislocated, so dry, so dead, and to this question the answer always must be, “O Lord God, Thou knowest.” Yes, He does know. He sees, as He saw of old into the grave of Lazarus—He sees, as He saw into the tomb of the Lord Jesus—so into the secrets of a soul of whose faith and love only these dry bones remain ; and He knows that life is again possible—ay, that it is much more than possible. The word of His power may again clothe with form and with flesh. The breath of His spirit may again impart animation, warmth, movement, growth. The quickening power of Christ’s resurrection, from which all recovery, whether moral or social or physical, must go forth—this may assert itself victoriously in that desert soul, so that, like as Christ was raised from the dead in the glory of the Father, even so this soul should walk in newness of life.

“PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.”

AN APPEAL TO PRUDENCE.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 1ST, 1878.

“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”—AMOS iv. 12.

“IF you wish to master a moral truth,” so said a man, who knew a great deal of human nature, “depend upon it, sooner or later, you must give a good deal of time to the work. The reason,” he added, “why so many men make so little of life is that they do not know what it is to concentrate attention. They interest themselves in everything. They possess themselves of nothing.” This has always been more or less true. It is especially true in a busy age like ours, when more facts and thoughts press in upon the mind of civilised man than at any other time in the world's history. And if it be true now of men generally, it is true, as nowhere else, in a city like this, in which the thoughts as well as the countenances of all the peoples of the earth continually meet—in which the energy, the resource, the many-sidedness of human life is seen as perhaps nowhere else on the surface of the globe. The Egyptian solitaries of the fourth century of our era were in many respects unlike us Londoners of to-day, but, at least, they understood the value of concentrating the mind on a moral truth which you wish to make your own. They may have done less than justice to the practical demands of human life. They knew what was due from man to the majesty and to the depths of truth. One of these men would take with him to his cell in the desert some one text of Scripture—only one—to be thought over, prayed over, struggled over, for an entire day, for a week, for a month. No daily newspaper placed him in contact with the outer world: no human voice broke in at regular but distant hours upon the solemn monotony of that sustained meditation. He sternly denied himself any

such variety of occupation as might give a new direction to his thought. He lived from hour to hour, from sunrise to sunset, in sunshine and in rain, by day and almost throughout the night, in steady, unbroken, unflinching contemplation of the one precept, the one truth, on which he had determined to fix his thought. And at the end what had happened? Had he penetrated it? Had he even compassed it? No, he would still say, if he could have used our modern words, that he was an infant crying for the light—an infant crying in the night,—that he was on the surface of truth, and not yet within it,—that he was on the ocean in a frail barque, but only endowed, after all, with a new and juster idea of the measureless spaces around him. Yes, that is what is gained by such concentration as this—not comprehension, but some sort of apprehension of what there is to comprehend—not insight and real mastery, but some approach to perceiving what the conditions of insight and mastery may possibly be; for each utterance of the infinite Being has in it something of His own infinity, and while we men cannot hope, by any devotion of time or toil, to penetrate the impenetrable—to exhaust the inexhaustible—we may do a great deal towards finding out what is really possible here and now—what we may hope for as possible in a higher and a more illuminated life. There is a dry proverb, probably Eastern, which says that, after all, the sun is larger than it looks. What is implied is that the mass of human beings think of the sun as being as large as it looks and no larger. They give it now and then a passing glance on a bright day. They are not prepared to contradict what is known about its real size. They do not think at all on the subject. Of that slow and patient toil whereby astronomy has climbed up to ascertain the sun's distance from our earth and its magnitude, and even to speculate on the secrets of its brilliancy, they are content to be ignorant, or condemned to be ignorant: anyhow they *are* ignorant.

And, as with the sun, so it has fared with some of the simplest and most familiar Christian truths which present themselves to the eyes of Christendom in those new heavens upon which faith gazes. If they are to be more to us than daily meaningless commonplaces, we must not think it enough to bestow on them at distant intervals a passing notice. We must, on the contrary, look hard at them. We must find out what has been thought about them by those who have preceded us. We must, so to say, go round and round them. We must take account of their different bearings and aspects, or, at least, of some of these. We must, if we can, place ourselves in a condition to understand, with respect to them, too, that, after all, the sun is something greater—much greater—than it seems to be. At the end we may well find that what we know is very little, but, at least, we shall be far better off than we should have been had no effort whatever been made. We shall know thus much—that there are worlds of truth above, around, beneath us, which we can not as yet, but may some day hope to, make our own.

It is, my brethren, on this general principle that I propose, on this and the three following Sundays in the Advent season, that we should place ourselves under the guidance and the inspiration of the words of the shepherd prophet, Amos, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" Certainly, when Christmas day comes upon us we shall be as far as possible from feeling that we have got to the bottom of this solemn and tremendous warning. Four short half hours or four successive Sunday afternoons will not—can not—do for us what a month of uninterrupted meditation has failed to do for those old Egyptian recluses. But this, at least, is possible—that we may some of us see some new flashes of light pass across

the surface, the text, the sound, of very familiar words which have lost—if for us they ever had—their meaning. It is possible that by God's grace some of us may learn this Advent to begin about a work which has, as yet, been neglected, or quite forgotten—to prepare to meet our God.

A warning like this appeals to a great deal in human character. It touches every many sides of thought and life. And to-day let me begin by observing, and confine myself to observing, that it appeals with particular force to our sense of prudence.

Prudence—what is it? Why need I ask the question? Looked at from an every-day—from a popular—point of view, prudence is the first, perhaps, of all the virtues—the most needed for the well-being of human life. Prudence in man is not unlike the higher forms of instinct in the animals; only human prudence knows better what it is about than does animal instinct. It is too deliberate to be mere instinct. Prudence in man does two things: it thinks, and it either acts or it decides to abstain from acting. It looks beyond the present moment. It is mainly concerned, not with what is, but with what is coming. It almost lives in the future whether immediate, or remote, but with a view to present action. Forecast without action is mere dreaminess. Action without forecast is always folly. Prudence is foresight with a practical object. We all of us know it by sight when we meet it in the ordinary paths of life. Prudence! It is the labouring man who reflects that he will not be always strong and young, and who puts something by, year by year, if he can manage to do so, for his old age. Prudence! It is the parent who scans again and again the character of his son before he decides on his work in life, or on the education which will best prepare him for it. Prudence! It is the boy or the young man, who thinks to himself in his wiser moments that health and high spirits and older friends and opportunities for improvement will not always last, and who betakes himself seriously to the task of improving, as he may, his mind and his character. Prudence sometimes acts by deciding not to act where action would be more or less natural. The prudent man does not marry when he has no prospects whatever of being able to support a wife and family, nor does he put the savings of years into the first investment that offers him a tempting rate of interest with the risk of waking some morning to find that a gigantic deficit has to be made good out of his remaining capital. No, such is prudence in daily life—sometimes active, sometimes cautious and hesitating, but always thoughtful.

And when prudence addresses itself to higher matters it is, as before, in this two-fold character still thought, still action, only it commands a wider horizon. Its thought reaches away beyond the grave. It acts, or it hesitates to act, with an eye to eternity. Prudence, it must be admitted, is a bad name for a virtue. It often is tacitly associated with selfishness. It is contrasted, and much to its disadvantage, with disinterestedness. "Here," men say, "here is prudence taking thought for the morrow, but a divine wisdom points to a perfection which takes no thought for the morrow, since the morrow will take thought for the things of itself, and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." And in earthly matters we must admit that prudence is not always exactly goodness. It gets into bad company—does prudence—in this our poor fallen nature. It loses something of the lustre of its original form. There is prudence and prudence in earthly matters—a prudence which is narrow, grasping, selfish, and a prudence which can be frank and open-handed. But in the things of heaven there is only one kind of prudence possible. To take really a wise forethought for the spiritual self—to act and to refrain from action,

accordingly—is to be truly disinterested as well. In this rare and bright atmosphere the truest good of man and the glory of the perfect being and the highest good of all other beings absolutely coincide. In seeking the one, we do seek—we cannot help seeking—the other. In doing what is spiritually best for self, we achieve disinterestedness. We take no thought for the morrow, in one sense. In another, we never forget it. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, if, as is the case, prudence be, in the human soul, a shadow of an attribute of the Divine Being which touches us at every point of our existence? What is prudence in man is providence in God; only God, being the All-sufficient, has not to care for Himself, but for each of His creatures, and, being the Eternal, He cannot, strictly speaking, look forward, since to Him what has been, and is, and is to be, forms an everlasting now. Still, of this, His all-penetrating care, which, looked at from our human point of view, seems like a foresight or providence, human prudence, which is really foresight, is a ray in the soul of man. And human prudence most assuredly is likeliest to the pattern in the heavens when it is most disinterested. The artisan—I am speaking now of a case within my personal knowledge—the artisan who could anticipate for a son a life of conspicuous usefulness, and then who could work year after year for two guineas a week, and save nearly one-half for the schooling of a boy who thereby was able to achieve the very highest honours at the university—what is this but on earth a true ray in our human life of that loving providence which gives to us all, if we will, the chance of moving heavenward?

And, therefore, in connection with the first and gravest of all subjects, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in His teaching, continually appeals to the sense of prudence as that which, if exercised on a sufficient field, will secure to man his truest happiness. He points out the imprudence of becoming wealthy in this world's goods without being rich towards God. He commends the unjust steward, not for his injustice, but for his providence in making friends of his lord's debtors, with a view to the future; and then He adds, sorrowfully, that "the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." He pathetically describes the man who, in the midst of his plans for pulling down his barns and building greater, hears the solemn summons—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." He bid His disciples lay not up for themselves treasures on the earth where moth and rust may corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but "Lay up for yourselves treasures in an imperishable heaven." He asks pointedly, "What man of you, having to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he shall be able to finish it?" The two disciples petition Him for thrones on the right hand and the left, and He asks in turn, "Can ye drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" He raises the all-including question. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In these and many other sayings our Lord recognises, endorses, consecrates, the sense of prudence as an instrument for attaining the true and eternal end of man. And, surely, if there be any words that are not His, yet which appeal to our sense of prudence with peculiar force, they are those of the prophet in the text, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

And these words lose nothing of their force when we consider by whom they were uttered and under what circumstances. Amos was a rude countryman, who had spent his boyhood in tending sheep and goats and in cultivating sycamore trees in the small village of Tekoa, in Judah. One

day he was summoned to prophesy to Israel—how exactly we are not told. He was, he says, no prophet, neither was he a prophet's son. He had not been trained in those schools of the prophets which Samuel had founded up and down the country, and by which the true religion was, to a certain extent, kept alive in the midst of apostate Israel. He was like those literate clergymen among ourselves who are sometimes ordained without having been at a university, but for him, as for the others, the light of heaven did more, much more, than could have been done by any human teacher. A walk of eight hours would have brought him from his home in the south and across the frontier to Bethel, where was the chief sanctuary of the apostate tribes—where was the altar which the man of God had denounced in the days of the first Jeroboam. And thence he would have travelled northward to the capital, and, like Hosea, he must have seen Samaria in the days of its greatest prosperity, for they were the days of Jeroboam the second, the most powerful of the kings who ruled the ten tribes after the separation from Judah. In those days Israel was a state of much political account in Western Asia. Considerable additions had been made to its territory, and, as yet, its people had not learned to think of the dangers which might threaten their prosperity from the valley of the Euphrates. In those days Samaria, as the capital of a strong, confident, and prosperous power, was a city of some outward splendour and pretension; and a simple peasant from the south, like Amos, if he had had no higher illumination to instruct him, might well have paused, in silence and in wonder, as he entered its gates. But as we read the collection of utterances which make up his book, we see how little his eye was caught by what lay upon the surface—how keenly he observed all that goes to make up the real life, whether of a man or of a people. In Samaria, side by side, there were found the extremes of luxury and the extremes of want—the debauchery and expenditure of a wealthy class made possible by grinding oppression of the poor,—by perversion of justice—by extortion—by violence—by a system of false weights and measures—by all the machinery of social ruin. Amos compares the ladies of Samaria, whose expenses were supported out of the toil and sufferings of the poor, to the fierce and unfeeling she-kine of Bashan, that dwell on the mountains of Samaria. He mentioned how, in the public courts of justice, they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals—how high officials afflict the just, take a bribe, and turn aside the poor in the gate from his right. Read through Amos and Hosea: they are not very long books: read them through before next Sunday, and observe how two religious minds look, not with the same eyes, but with the same general result, at the same society around them. Hosea points to the root of Israel's evil: Amos sketches the branches. Amos denounces the details of popular sin: Hosea keeps in view the animating principles. But we are in the same atmosphere throughout as we read the two prophets. They are each of them looking hard at a society which had many outward tokens of prosperity and splendour, but which had ceased to take any real account of God.

Amos is the prophet and the apostle of prudence throughout his book. To Amos, a simple pious soul, caring chiefly, or rather exclusively, about questions of truth and falsehood, and right and wrong, and caring little, or rather not at all, about the vulgar glitter of a God-forgetting civilisation, it was clear that the state of things in Samaria could not last. It would break up from within, or it would be broken up from without. It had not the strength of resistance or the strength of cohesion. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Yes, Israel was to meet Him, in a few short

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years, here, on this earth—in national disaster, national agony, national ruin; for God looks nations, as He looks men, in the face, in temporal judgments. Certainly, He is here, and to be met with by those who seek Him, at other seasons. He is, we know, the very atmosphere which we breathe—in which, whether we will or not, we move, and are, and have our being; but, such as we are through sin, He makes us feel His presence rather in the storm than in the sunshine—rather in judgment than in blessing. And thus, while the sky was yet bright, and the prospect fair, Amos hears the whispered mutterings of the yet distant tempest. Amos lifts his eyes to the heights which surround the city of Samaria, and in which its people were accustomed to see the natural defences of their capital; and he bids an avenging host of heathen to look down from those heights upon the wrong and oppression within the walls; and he foretells a day when an adversary will bring down the strength of Israel, and its palaces will be spoiled. There were past judgments to which he points as earnest of the future. The recent famine, when God gave to Israel cleanness of teeth in all His cities; the drought, when two or three cities wandered into one city to drink water; the blister and mildew, when gardens, and vineyards, and orchards, were smitten with death; the plague, after the manner of Egypt; and, worst of all, the earthquake—never a common visitation on the soil of Palestine, though common enough in Northern Syria—the earthquake, which brought ruin and death to man, to civilisation, to nature; these were but the heralds of some other judgment which he does not name expressly, but with reference to which he says, “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” What had been might yet be—would yet be—ay, and more also. It was an appeal to prudence.

And since prudence is action as well as forecast, Amos is ready with his practical advice. “Thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me, and ye shall live. But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba, for Gilgal shall go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.” Again, “Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.” Again, as against the nature worshippers, “Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them on the face of the earth. The Lord is His Name.” And again, as against the mockers at right and wrong, “Seek good and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of Hosts, shall be with you. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate. It may be,” he adds, “that the Lord will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.” What is all this but prudence in action—practical prudence—the prudence which had looked hard unto the future, and would act accordingly? What are these but variations on the solemn warning, “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

To Israel the words of Amos meant, at any rate primarily, a judgment in the not distant future. To us Christians they mean this and more. The faith of Jesus Christ illuminates the Old Testament with meanings which were in it from the first, but which its first readers thought not of. “Prepare to meet thy God.” This may be God’s message to a modern people as to Israel of old. He has not changed because some six-and-twenty centuries have passed since the days of Amos. Now, as of old, He meets the peoples of the world chiefly in the hour of temporal judgment. He meets them in social unsettlement—in depression of trade—in

the transfer of the sources of wealth to the other markets of the world—in the collapse of credit—in all the consequences which then follow wherever wealth exists under highly artificial conditions, and where all depends on confidence. And we men look about us for some second causes of the judgment. We see it sometimes in the mismanagement of capital—sometimes in the misconduct or the irritability of labour—sometimes in some fatalistic doctrine that commercial prosperity and depression move in recurrent and necessary cycles, and that we have happened just now upon a period of depression. But what if the real cause be at once simpler and deeper! What if He Who is the real Lord of commerce, as He is the Lord of revelation, so acts upon the minds and wills of men as to bring about a punishment for past ingratitude? Certainly, it may well have been that if, some few years ago, in days when our commercial prosperity in this country was at its height, men of substance had decided to give to God according to the old Divine rule—at the least, each man, in some shape or other, one-tenth of his income, as a matter of sheer duty and right, and then as much more as might be, as a matter of love—it might now have been otherwise with us than as it is. God Himself, I say, meets us as a nation in this persistent depression of trade. He bids us ask ourselves whether we have used our wealth and our opportunities as He would have us use them. He warns us that, if we turn a deaf ear to present judgments, there may be some sterner judgments in store for us. Ay, and He meets us as men, as sons, as fathers, as wives, as mothers, as single human beings, each on our trial. He meets us in the many vicissitudes of private fortune—in failure of work—in the alienation of trusted friends—in the death of those we love—in the stealthy approach of illness felt in our own bodily frame—in permanent loss of health and spirits—in the never knowing what it is to have a night's rest. But these things, I say, do not come to us by chance, nor does He Who sends them merely send them to us and let them do their work. They are the very instruments of His approach. They are the very chariot on which He rides, as He draws near to the single soul, and looks it straight in the face, and asks it how it could bear the glance of His eye, and whispers to it, "Prepare to meet thy God."

And to prepare for these meetings with God is the business of man in days of health and strength—in days of buoyant hopes and high spirits—in days when, as yet, no cloud has arisen above life's horizon, and nothing threatens to disturb its tranquil harmonies. God grant that those of us whom it concerns may do this while we may. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Every man who believes that God exists, and that he himself has a soul which does not perish with the body, knows that a time must come when this meeting will be inevitable. In the hour of death, whether in mercy or in displeasure, God looks into the face of His creature as never before. The veils of sense, which long have hidden His countenance, then are stripped away; and as spirit meets with spirit without the interposition of any film of matter, so does man in death meet with his God. It is this which renders death so exceedingly solemn. Ere yet the last breath has fairly passed from the body, or the failing eyes have closed, the soul has partly, at any rate, entered upon a world altogether new, magnificent, awful. It has seen beings, shapes, modes of existence, never even imagined before. But it has done more than that. It has met its God as a disembodied spirit can meet Him.

"Prepare, prepare for death"—surely this is the voice of prudence. The one certain thing about life is that we must leave it. The one certain thing about death is that we must die. What will happen first we know

not. How much time will pass before our hour comes we know not. What will be the manner of our death, violence or disease, an accident, or what we call natural causes, we know not. Where we shall die, at home, or on a visit, in our beds, or in the street, or in a railway train, or in a sinking steamboat, this, too, we know not. Under what circumstances we shall die, in solitude or among friends, with the consolations of religion, or without them, in spasms of agony, or softly, just as if we were going to sleep, this we know not. The time, the place, the manner, the circumstances of death—these are hidden from every one of us. But that which stands out from among all these uncertainties, in absolute, unassailable, tragic certainty, is the fact itself that we must die—each and all of us. Scripture says—experience echoes, "It is appointed." "Prepare, then, to meet thy God:" this is the second precept of prudence. Prepare to meet Him in death. If there were any chance of escaping death, or of somewhat modifying it, or of even postponing it—if science, which has done so much for man, could keep the last enemy at bay until at least we were each of us ready and willing to encounter Him, then it might not be imprudent to defer our preparations for meeting with God. But if man, so powerful elsewhere, is powerless here—if, with all our increasing mastery of nature, we are individually just as little able to escape dissolution at a given moment as were our rudest forefathers, then, surely, "Prepare to meet thy God" should be a text written up in large letters in every Christian bed-room, that each night, as we lie down to rest, and each morning, as we rise from sleep, we should be reminded, like the Macedonian monarch of old, that we must die, and, as Christians, should never forget that death means nothing less than meeting with the Author and Redeemer of our life. "Prepare to meet thy God." Death is not all that is before us. "It is appointed to all men once to die, and, after that, the judgment." What our moral sense demands, God's revelation in Christ proclaims—that we shall each of us be judged; "for God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given an assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead." That is the day—that is the final day—the solemn, unimaginable meeting with God—towards which every human life—every national history—all human movement whatever—is moving steadily, inevitably forward. It may be delayed for ages: it will come at last. And then all will enter in this direction or in that, upon an endless destiny.

Of some of the prospects which that day opens up, we may think another Sunday. To-day let us reflect that to keep it steadily in view, and to act accordingly, is the work of every human life that is not wasted—that is alive to the first and to the last lesson of true prudence.

“PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.”

AN APPEAL TO REVERENCE.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 15TH, 1878.

“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”—AMOS iv. 12.

THE words of Amos, as they are understood by Christendom, bidding us prepare for a final and extraordinary meeting with God, appeal, as we have seen, to our sense of prudence and to our sense of justice. The words rouse these original instincts of the human soul to a new activity. Prudence is quickened when we see before us at an unascertained distance a vast and certain catastrophe in which we must share, and justice wears a new face for us when we have come to think it a matter of certainty that we shall be individually judged by an all-surveying, all-powerful and holy Master. But behind the sense of justice and the sense of prudence there is in the soul of man another sense or feeling, more indefinite, yet not less real than these—the sense of awe or reverence. What does this say to us when it hears the words, “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel”?

Reverence—what is it? It is not exactly fear, or love, or admiration. In its earlier stages there is in it more of fear; in its later, more of love. Fear, love, and admiration all enter into it in different proportions. It cannot be identified with any one of them. It is the emotion—the virtuous emotion—whereby the soul of man sincerely acknowledges the presence of greatness; and, the human soul being what it is, some acknowledgment of greatness is always natural to it even in its undeveloped and degraded conditions. And thus we may at once brush away two misconceptions about reverence.

First of all, reverence is not in any sense a fictitious sort of virtue. Persons who have little or no eye for real greatness, and see reverent people around them without seeing the object which provokes their

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reverence, are led to think, perhaps naturally enough, that what they witness is a sort of acting. They imagine that no perfectly natural and, as they would say, manly person could or would be reverent,—that reverence is the upshot of artificial circumstances, of artificial and stinted convictions,—that it is the fruit of forced training, of narrow associations, of subjection to characters or to traditions of a particular type. In short, they maintain that there is always a fictitious element in it which makes it distasteful to thoroughly honest and strong characters. No, my brethren, this is a misapprehension. The bent head, the bended knee, which mean nothing—which acknowledge no being or person that demands the homage—are not reverence at all, but something altogether different. Reverence, like all virtue that deserves the name, is based on truth. The truth of some greatness which the soul acknowledges must be seriously felt if there is to be real reverence. And, secondly, reverence is not an exclusively or chiefly ecclesiastical or religious excellence, although it is sometimes referred to as if it had been born and bred within the precincts of the Christian Church. Of course, the Church of Christ is the great school of reverence, because, within the Church, as nowhere else, the highest and most commanding greatness is continually presented to the soul of man. But reverence as a human excellence is older than the Church, older than Christianity, older than revelation. It is as old as the idea that there is anything in existence that is greater than man; and, though the Christian Church and religion have heightened reverence almost indefinitely, they did not create it. They found it already in existence, wandering about the world as if it were sorely at a loss for an adequate object. They baptised it; they did not create it. Nay, more; among men who unhappily reject Christianity at the present day, but who are still alive to greatness, whether in nature or in man, no one would deny that there are instances of even conspicuous reverence within such limits as are possible to them.

Reverence, then, is the sincere acknowledgment of a higher greatness, and, accordingly, the first school of reverence which has been provided for us is the natural world around us. Think of man in a primitive—in a distant—age opening his eyes upon the world of nature in which his Maker has placed him, and discovering around him the creatures, the forces, the processes, the catastrophes, which successively arrest his gaze. As yet, familiarity has not blunted his sense of wonder, and he feels more than wonder: he feels awe. He is consciously everywhere in the presence of a higher greatness, manifold in its forms and activities, and more and more impressing him with a sense of his own relative insignificance. He sees a tree—one of the kings, it may be, of the primæval forest—with its head towering upwards, and its roots striking deep into the soil beneath his feet. He observes how it grows—puts out its branches, leaves, flowers, fruit. It is, he says to himself, a something which lives, yet it lives a life unlike his own. He feels an awe at it. Or he is the inhabitant of a valley which is bounded by an impassable mountain. He looks up to where the mountain's head buries itself in the clouds, and he feels like a dwarf at the feet of a giant upon whose head is resting the sky above him, and he feels an awe at it. Or he lives on the bank of a river which waters the fields, which feeds the flocks, and which then rises, as if it were an angry enemy, to the proportions of a destructive torrent, inundating the land on this bank and on that, and sweeping everything before it; and he is awed by it. Or he lifts up his eyes to the sky above him, to the sun by day, to the stars and to the moon by night; and here, too, he feels, are objects of which he knows nothing,—objects vast,

distant, mysterious ; and he is awed. Or he marks the clouds changing their forms from moment to moment, as if they were living things ; or he watches the rain descending, he knows not whence, sometimes as a gentle friend, sometimes as an implacable scourge. Or he hears the thunder muttering above his head as if it were the voice of some awful being out of his reach ; or he feels the surface of the earth rock and quake beneath his feet, and he suspects the energy of a subterranean power intent on doing him a mischief.

Of the awe excited by the natural world upon primitive man we have ample illustrations in the religious poetry of India ; and, although awe is not fully reverence, yet it is elementary reverence. Man feels behind nature a higher power of some kind, which appeals to his sense of greatness. Undoubtedly, in the absence of revelation, the awe excited by the resource and the mystery of the natural world has led to abundant error and degradation. Men gazed at the forest oak till it took possession of their whole mind and imagination. They became Druids. Or men watched the fire, so faithful a servant, so terrible a master—man's master, probably, for many a long year, ere it became his servant, and he became what we should call a Parsee. Or he dwelt in curious wonder on the productive powers of nature, and forthwith, throughout Syria and along the whole southern coast of the Mediterranean, there arose those Baal worshippers of which we read so much in the days of the Jewish kings, and which were at once so fascinating and so cruel. Nay, in time, every object around man became a divinity. If he was an Egyptian, he worshipped the great river which brought plenty to his country, and the monsters that inhabited it ; if a Persian, the sun, the moon, fire, water, the winds ; if an Indian, the sky, or the dawn, or the clouds, the earth, the mountains, the streams ; if an African savage, representing long centuries of progressive degradation, then he prayed to a fetish, burying his old awe for an unseen power in his mercantile eagerness to possess a serviceable charm. Idolatry is the grave of reverence. Reverence expires when that which meets the eye has led man to forget the invisible Being beyond it. But, as between man and nature, it was meant to be otherwise. Nature is, in its way, God's first revelation to man. His invisible attributes of wisdom, of power, and, within limits, of goodness, "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" ; and when we sing the twenty-ninth Psalm, which describes a thunderstorm in the Lebanon, or the Hymn *Benedicite*, which calls on all the works of God to bless and magnify Him for ever, we replace nature on her true throne as the first teacher of elementary reverence. Ah, the freshness of that early impression of, and reverence for, the greatness which shrouds itself behind, while it is distinct from, the world of nature ! Do not the jaded and worn-out children of our modern civilisation seek to restore vigour of mind and body at intervals by the emotions which nature can still inspire ? Amid the silence of the mountains, broken only by the fall of the avalanche, or on the rocky shore which is lashed by the waves of the Atlantic, even now nature speaks to the soul of man, and science does not, as may be supposed, break the charm. Science explains just what meets the eye ; science carries us back one step from the touch of sense ; but then science herself only opens out new fields of wonder whose existence is not even suspected by sense. Behind the laws which science discovers, as behind the phenomena which are gazed on in his inexperience by primitive man, there is the higher greatness of the legislator, as the higher greatness of the Creator. "The more I know," a man of science has said—"the more I know of the secrets of nature, the more am I lost

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in reverence for the power which I feel everywhere around me.” Nature, then, is our first teacher of that practical sense of a higher greatness which we call reverence.

But the lesson is learned, secondly, and more effectively, from man himself. Man becomes an object of reverence whenever a higher greatness than his own rests upon him; and it may do this in one of two ways, as the greatness of office, or as the greatness of character.

High office among men, when legitimately attained, deserves reverence. High office always and everywhere is a shadow of the majesty of God. The commandment to honour an earthly parent includes in its spirit the duty of honouring all who have upon them this certificate of greatness. “To love, honour, and succour my father and mother, to honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her, to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters, to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters”—this is how every child among us explains the fifth commandment; for the fifth commandment does not cease to bind when we grow up, or when our earthly parents are removed. When obedience to its letter is no longer possible, obedience to its spirit becomes more than ever a duty, and all on whom there rests a shadow of the Divine become objects of a conscientious reverence. The first magistrate of a state may be an hereditary monarch or an elected president, but the precept which bespeaks for him the reverence of men, as bearing on earth a likeness of the Divine authority, is always obligatory.

My brethren, it is impossible for us to approach so near to the person of the sovereign without reminding ourselves of the great sorrow which has but yesterday darkened her life. Her people will feel on this occasion, as they felt seventeen years ago, that the Queen’s trouble is their own. They will associate themselves with her by their sympathies and in their prayers. They will pray that the evening of a life in which the highest office has been adorned by qualities which, in the humblest of subjects, would command an involuntary reverence, may be brightened by those consolations which God alone can give, for, in truth, it is character rather than—nay, much more than—office which commands reverence. Office is conferred on man. Office is in a sense outside him. Character is himself. Apart from character, office may only invite that sort of reverence which men pay to the wild powers of nature; but conspicuous goodness compels reverence, which, with due allowance for the difference between a created object and the uncreated, is akin to the love of God. In every generation there are at least a few men who inspire those who approach them with this feeling which is neither exactly love, nor yet admiration, nor yet moral submission, but that compound of all these which we call reverence. In the old days of paganism, there were some such men who, by some one feature of character, awed their contemporaries, as did Aristides by his justice, and Scipio by his chastity, and Cato by his inflexibility. And the Christian Church, as might be expected, after receiving those mighty gifts of grace which the ascended Christ has bestowed upon her, has from the apostolic days until now produced an unbroken succession of men and women who have led lives which are indisputably and legitimately objects of reverence. The saints, canonised or uncanonised—the saints conspicuous or hidden—are those Christians on whose characters there have rested the light and the beauty of the Divine Being, and who therefore have compelled their contemporaries or their successors to recognise in them a greatness which bespeaks reverence.

Nor is reverence the less due to these great names because it may have been—because it has been—exaggerated. Exaggeration becomes impossible when we remember that the true object to which reverence is due is nothing in man himself, as it is not anything in nature herself. It is that higher greatness which in both may be discovered beyond. We live, my brethren, in an utilitarian age, and some men who can see for themselves the usefulness of prudence and the usefulness of justice ask, “What are the advantages of being reverent?” And the answer to that question is that reverence is a condition—we may say an indispensable condition—of true human improvement. Consciously or unconsciously, man becomes like that which he imitates, and he imitates that which he reveres. When you know what are the ideals—what the heroes of a man—of a boy, of a nation, you know a great deal about the character of the nation, of the man, of the boy. Reverence is no mere inoperative sentiment when it is sincere. Reverence carries with it practical consequences; and hence the extreme importance that the objects of reverence should be, as far as may be, worthy of it,—that parents, teachers, all in authority, all on whom the eye of others naturally rests, should be worthy of this tribute of respect. Woe to the man or to the boy who reveres nothing and nobody. He is cut off from one necessary condition of improvement. His own present attainments or virtues, be they what they may,—his failures, his vices, be these what they may,—are the measure of his possible excellence. Woe to the country or to the race which can point to no lofty characters, whether in the present or the past, on which it can gaze with a thankful reverence. No poverty is so ruinous as a moral poverty like that. It was, indeed, the need of an object absolutely worthy of human reverence which formed one of the reasons for the greatest of all the manifestations of the love of God. That one human form—one human character—might command a boundless reverence, the reverence which the absence of any moral flaw whatever can alone command,—that this supreme condition of true human improvement might be granted to our race, the infinite Being submitted Himself to bonds, and appeared among us in a created form, that in Him all Christian reverence might centre, and might, without fear of error or exaggeration, abandon itself to all the impetuosity of its enthusiasm—might pass inevitably into the highest expression of reverence,—might pass into adoration. Below the throne of Jesus Christ reverence is always paid to a greatness distinct from and beyond the object which immediately provokes it: it is paid to God. Behind nature we feel the omnipotence of God; behind human office, the authority of God; behind human character in its higher forms, the holiness of God. We do not yet see God: we feel Him. Between God and ourselves there is a veil, and this veil tempers the ray of His glory, and, at the same time, it conceals something; and thus the sense of reverence here on earth is only imperfectly satisfied, and yet if it could be now confronted with its object, it would be overwhelmed. Just as the natural eye cannot bear to gaze steadily at the sun, so in this, our earthly state, we could not bear the full effulgence of God. It would be too much for us. “No man shall see my face and live.” And this has been felt by God’s greatest servants in all ages. When they have caught a glimpse of the Divine glory, they have presently pleaded that it might be hidden from their eyes, or they have fainted at the sight. Thus said Isaiah after the vision in the temple,—“Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” And thus St. John

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after the opening vision of Christ in the glory of the apocalypse,—“When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead.” Amos, too, knows the difference between that sort of apprehension of God which is common among men—between talking or thinking about Him as men do, while they think and talk with at least equal eagerness about a thousand different things besides, and meeting Him.

“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” “*Thy God.*” God was Israel’s God still, and Israel talked much of God. “The manner of Bethel,” as it was termed, was an organised worship of God, though a false one. The kings of Israel thought much of God, not, indeed, only or chiefly as the Lord Almighty, but as quite necessary to the political well-being of the ten tribes; and, just as Saul had sacrificed without hesitation because he thought that, notwithstanding God’s command it did not much matter, so Jeroboam had set up, and his successors had continued, a worship which God had disallowed, no doubt on the principle that, the Divine instructions notwithstanding, it would come to the same thing in the end. Israel, in short, was irreverent; and Amos bids Israel prepare to meet its God in quite a different sense from that in which He had been met either at Bethel or in Samaria in the prosperous days which were drawing to their close. Israel was to meet Him in suffering. Suffering does much for man; and among other things, if men will, it does this: it strips off from the eye the conventional films which hide out God; it brings us face to face with Him. And Israel should meet God in sharp and certain suffering. Therefore the Lord, the God of Hosts, saith thus, “Wailing shall be in all streets, and they shall say in all highways, Alas, alas; and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful to wailing, for I will pass through them, saith the Lord.” And therefore it is that Amos says, “Prepare.”

And so, too, with us Christians as to death and judgment. Is it not true that, in our ordinary lives, God, if I may say so, takes His chance amid a thousand objects of interest? We do not, it may be, forget Him, but do we give Him anything approaching to His due? We talk and think about Him now and then. We talk of the Divine attributes of power, wisdom, goodness, as to us still invisible abstractions. The day is coming when we shall *see* Him. We talk of Him Who was born at Bethlehem, Who walked by the lake of Galilee, Who died on Calvary, Who rose from the grave; but He is visible somewhere even now, and “every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him.” The veils and films and clouds, material and mental, which intercept Him now, will pass away, and “we shall see Him as He is.” Think, brethren, of the first minute—of the first five minutes—after death. Many whom we have known—many who were with us not long ago—have seen already that sight of sights. She whom England mourns to-day—she has seen it. They do not return to tell us, and we think of them too often only as they were while they were with us, and not as they are or may be after that momentous change in that new and astonishing world on which they have entered. And yet we, too, you and I, every one of us, have that same experience of the first five minutes after death certainly awaiting us. “We shall see Him as He is,” with all His attributes, as if they were living things, inseparable from His everlasting essence—with the countless ministers of His will passing hither and thither an errands of mercy, of punishment, of preparation, beneath His throne. What must not that sight mean to those who come upon it, suddenly, and without having given an hour of reverent thought to it in their whole lives? What may it not mean to those who have been saying every day for years, “Even so, come,

Lord Jesus"? What should it not exact in the way of preparation from that instinct, that original instinct, of reverence, which neither nature, nor man, nor the blessings that we have in the Christian church militant, nor anything short of the unveiled face of God Himself, will lastingly satisfy?

Yes, brethren, this is *the* question: How are we, you and I, to be educated for the sight of God after death? I answer—and this is a practical consideration with which I conclude—I answer, among other things, and chiefly, by worship. It was once said to myself, "Religion is all very well, if by religion you mean morality, if religion is something which makes men honest, industrious, useful, benevolent members of society." But it was added, "If by religion you mean worship, I frankly say I do not see the good of it. Worship is at best the indulgence of sentiment, which loses time, which achieves no tangible result, which may promote superstition." And this opinion, I fear, is not altogether singular. And yet, surely, my brethren, it also is not altogether reasonable, for religion is neither morality nor worship. It is the relation which binds the soul to God, of which relation morality is a necessary symptom, and worship a necessary exercise. Yet, who ever heard of anything that could be called a religion which was without a worship? All false religions, which deserve the name, have some kind of worship as their expression, while worship is of the very essence of that one religion which claims, as we Christians believe with reason, to have come from God. A great part of the instructions of the old Jewish lawgiver have reference to worship; and although, under the Gospel, worship has changed its character, because, through the mercy of the Incarnate Son, Christians are brought infinitely nearer to its object, still, in the New Testament, worship is not represented as less essential to the very existence of religion than it is in the Old. The truth is that, wherever God is thought of as a living Being, the desire to speak with Him, and that under the only conditions which befit the approach of the finite to the Infinite—of the created to the Creator—that is to say, in worship—becomes irresistible. The idea of a religion without worship, and, as is implied, without any clear belief in its object, is not a religious idea at all. It is the conception of some clever modern minds who can not disguise from themselves the advantages which religion alone can confer on human society, but, who being unhappily without faith, endeavour to make, for social purposes, an impossible extract from what religion always has and always must be. What is worship? It is not simply prayer, or simply thanksgiving, or simply confession of sins, or simply praise, though praise comes nearest to it. These are acts of worship, but not worship itself. Worship is the conscious self-prostration of a reasonable creature before the illimitable greatness of its God. Worship is the highest expression of reverence, which cannot help prostrating itself in adoration. "O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker, for He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." This from age to age—this, whether in the synagogue or in the church—is the invitation to worship.

And here a main purpose of worship on earth on the part of Christians, who believe that they have to prepare for the sight of God in judgment, is that it is a preparation. Worship is an education for the inevitable future. Worship is a training of the soul's eye to bear the brightness of the everlasting sun. If there were no future, no judgment—nothing but

this earthly life, and sheer extinction at the end of it, prayer might still be prompted by a sort of faith in a ruler of life—in a dispenser of its blessings; praise might now and then be suggested by occasional gratitude; but the greatest of all motives for worship, public and private, would not exist. As it is, we Christians adore our God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—if intelligently—we adore Him with a view to that vast eternity which is certainly before us, and compared with which the claims and occupations of all here are infinitely little. We try to learn in worship, as by God's grace we may, to tone the manners, the occupations, the mental and moral bearing, which will engage us in the countless ages of the life to come. Surely, then, as we kneel in the privacy of our chambers, or as we cross the threshold of the church, each soul should say to itself, "Prepare to meet thy God." Prepare to meet Him now and here, for as of old, and in a more special way, "The Lord is in His temple"—the temple of the soul—the temple of the church.

But prepare also to meet Him hereafter—to meet Him in His unveiled majesty. Prepare, by the very worship which thou art now about to pay Him, for that most momentous meeting. Surely such a motive as this, if we could only do it justice, would transfigure our every act of worship—would give it reality, intensity, above all, reverence—would make worship in fact, what in theory it always has been, the best preparation for death—the antechamber of heaven.

“PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.”

AN APPEAL TO JUSTICE.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 8TH, 1878.

“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”—AMOS iv. 12.

LAST Sunday we had under consideration the appeal of the prophet Amos in the text as it addresses itself to our sense of prudence. The vicissitudes and uncertainty of life on one hand, and the certainty of death and of judgment on the other, appear to invest the warning, “Prepare to meet thy God,” with an altogether particular force when considered by the practical faculty which looks as far into the future as it can, and does the best that can be done in view of what it foresees as coming. To-day, we will bring another sense or instinct of the human soul into the presence of these solemn words. We will ask ourselves, What do they say when confronted with the sense of justice?

Justice—the sense of justice—what is it? You may well say, “Why ask the question?” Justice is, in truth, one of the most elementary ideas in the soul of man. It is part of that original stock of intuitions with which our minds find themselves possessed at the outset of life, and for the presence of which within us we can only account by saying that our Creator has given them to us. The idea of justice just as much belongs to the constitution of our minds as does our apprehension of the first truths of mathematics. Just as we cannot help seeing that things which

are equal to the same thing are equal to one another, so we cannot help perceiving that there is a fundamental difference between justice and injustice, even when we are not agreed as to what in detail is just or unjust. As to the true duties of justice there is indeed a broad difference of opinion among those human beings who do not receive God's revelation of His will in Jesus Christ. The old historian Herodotus said that, if the different nations of the world were to be asked what laws and usages were most reasonable, each would reply, its own. Still, that there is an absolute justice, whatever mistakes may be made about its application to human affairs, is, as the old heathen poet knew, a truth which is not of human origin. It has come to man from a higher source. It will survive all revolutions of human thought; it will last as long as the human mind itself.

Justice, then, is a primary element of human thought; but justice presupposes another idea—the idea of right. Justice is the virtue which takes care of the rights of other beings—which not merely avoids interference with these rights, but gives them what they claim, and the right of a being is the claim which it can make in virtue of the law of its nature. And thus the rights of God are the claims which He makes, because He necessarily is what He is; and the rights of man, or of the animals are the claims which they may make in virtue of the law of that nature which the Creator has given them. Rights, in the strict sense, belong to personal beings. Inanimate things have no rights whatever. Animals have limited rights, but certainly such as ought to protect them against cruelty—against, for instance, the being cut up alive in order to promote human knowledge. And men have rights, the full scope of which is traced by the revelation which God has made to man. And God has rights which, since He is the infinite Being, are boundless.

Now, of these various rights, justice is the practical recognition. It is also more. It is not merely a sentiment which recognises right; it is an operative passion which insists that right should be vindicated. Justice in man is the belief that this vindication is inevitable, and a desire to promote it as far as may be; and justice in man presumes the existence of a higher justice still. It asks from generation to generation, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

The rights of man. Yes, man as man, has rights conferred on him by the Being Who has given him existence, and secured or defined by that moral law which his Creator has discovered to him. The ultimate basis of right is not, as Hobbes, of Malmesbury, thought, might. It is not true that power is the measure of right—that, for instance, God's right to command is a result of His omnipotence, and that our duty to obey is only another name for our inability to resist Him. If this were true, then if any man were strong enough to subdue the whole human race, he would have the right to do so, and every human being would be bound to obey

him. But it would be also true that any man who could resist him successfully would have the right to do so, and thus the idea of moral obligation would altogether disappear from view in a conflict of brute force. Brute force would reign as right among men as among the animals. No; the ultimate basis of right is the will of the perfect moral Being. This will, being absolutely holy, is the rule of His own rights, and also of the rights of the creatures to whom He has given existence, and therefore, after all, the true Magna Charta of human rights is the second table of the Decalogue. The rights of the parent over the child—that authoritative relation in which human life most nearly approaches the Divine—these are secured by the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." The right of every human being to live—the inherent sanctity of human life—of the youngest, of the weakest, of the most useless—is proclaimed by the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder." The right to transmit the gift of life—the mysterious power of invoking the co-operation of the Divine Creator under the exact conditions prescribed by the moral law—is protected against outrage by the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The rights of property are implied, as they are guarded, by the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal;" the rights of character by the ninth, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." And, thus far, human law may echo, and, after its measure, it may enforce, the Divine. But, in the tenth commandment, the Divine law ascends into a world of motive where human law cannot follow it, and claims to regulate that which is at the root of all violations of human rights—unregulated desire, "Thou shalt not covet." These six commandments do recognise and protect human rights. They form, in their entirety and in their developments, the law of justice as between man and man.

Human justice is the assertion of the rights of man; and that phrase, or an equivalent, has been a power again and again in human history. Sometimes it has been uttered for very selfish purposes. Sometimes it has been asserted with a violence which has conspicuously outraged the very rights which were to be vindicated. And yet so sacred, so majestic, is the truth which underlies the words "human rights," that, in some of the darkest periods of history, these words have glowed with an almost regenerating power. They have given a new direction to the course of events, and to the minds of men. So it was pre-eminently in the days of our grandfathers some ninety or one hundred years ago. The right, first of all, to live, and to secure the necessities of life at the hands of society—the right to protect person and property against violence, though consecrated by long custom, yet condemned by the moral law—the right to organise society in such sort that the well-being of the greatest number should be efficiently provided for—these were ideas which shed upon the first French revolution, notwithstanding all its hideous excesses and

brutalities, a certain lustre which must cling to it for ever. Justice was the idea which broke up the old feudal society of Europe—justice conceived of as the assertion of human rights which had been trampled on or neglected under the old order of things. Unless there had been a force like this at work, that old society, most assuredly—so finished and graceful, so associated with a splendid history, so consecrated by the Christian traditions of a thousand years—would have gone on—must have gone on—for centuries. That which broke it up was the fertile and imperious idea of justice between class and class, as between man and man; and the cruelties and the follies which disfigured the catastrophe must not blind us to the intrinsic nobility and worth of one, at any rate, of the ideas which precipitated it—the idea of social justice.

Yes, justice as between man and man is a power. What is it which invests the proceedings of our courts of law with such general and popular interest? Certainly not the processes and forms of law itself, which, to ordinary minds, are dry, technical, even repulsive. Nor is it chiefly a vulgar curiosity about the lives and fortunes of other people, or a criminal satisfaction in their misfortunes or their crimes. These motives do undoubtedly account, to a certain extent, for the fact before us; but a truer and more adequate explanation is to be found in man's deep attachment—the attachment of every man at the bottom of his soul—to the idea of justice. That justice is to be somehow guarded, asserted, satisfied—that justice has resources for making herself felt as a power in human life,—this satisfies an appetite, a strong and most legitimate craving, in the human soul. The very eagerness that justice should be done is sometimes not unlikely to imperil the character of the justice which is done; but it witnesses to the hold which justice, as such, has upon the sympathies of men.

But the power of the idea of justice as between man and man is seen chiefly in this—that the present does not satisfy it. There is no room for it in the world at any existing moment, and those who are keen about it, and anxious that its claims should be respected, are obliged to look forward. Read Amos: read him from this point of view. He is so full of the future, because the idea of justice which possesses, which inspires him, makes him so dissatisfied with the present. He sees that human justice is refused to large numbers of people in Samaria; and, as he believes that “justice” is not a fine sentimental phrase, but a necessary attribute of the Being Who governs the world, he is quite sure that there will be a future in which the claims of justice will be recognised. And thus he cries to the governing class, “Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch yourselves upon couches, and eat the lambs of the flock, and the calves from the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to yourselves instruments of music, like David; that drink

wine in bowls, and anoint yourselves with the chief ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph ; therefore now shall these go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretch themselves shall be removed." And, again, the same sense of a future in which justice as between man and man will claim her own appears in the following. He is speaking of some wealthy oppressors in Israel. "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate : they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat ; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them ; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them." And so again, at a somewhat later time, but now with more of passion than before, "Hear this," he cries, "O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes, yea, and sell the refuse of wheat. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely, I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein ? And it shall rise up wholly as a flood, and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt." The spirit of all these passages is that justice is an imperious force which, though repressed or kept at bay for a time, must sooner or later have its way,—that it is like water, which must and will find its level,—that present appearances to the contrary go for nothing with those who believe in a moral God, and in the ultimate practical supremacy of His attributes in the world which He has made. These passages, in various ways, summon Israel to the work of social and moral regeneration. They bid Israel to bethink himself of what is coming, and what must come of that future which is made necessary by the present in which Israel lives. They bid Israel arise in awe, and in penitence prepare to meet his God.

And here is, in fact, my brethren, an abstract argument for a future life which comes home to the conscience of a good man more powerfully than any other. There are many other considerations which point to our immortality, drawn for instance, from an examination of the nature of the soul as a simple, uncompounded essence, which, therefore, cannot be reasonably supposed to dissolve with the material body at death ; and these arguments have their place, but then they address themselves to minds of a philosophical cast. They do not speak to the majority of men as does the moral argument for a future life which is based on the requirements of justice. That argument is that justice has not room enough in our present existence—that its limbs are, if I may say so, cramped and bound, that it cannot here breathe freely—that, if all ends with the grave,

justice cannot be said to be supreme over the destinies of man—that, rather, it is impotence and failure. Yes, most assuredly, either justice as between man and man is a dream, or it has not yet said its last word. It demands a future. And this belief in a future life varies exactly with the moral righteousness and vigour of a man's soul—with his belief in the absolute character of justice. As a good man looks out on the world and sees how many are the failures of human justice here and now—how domestic justice, social justice, political justice, are alike maimed or travestied—how hopeless would seem to be the chance of establishing upon the earth, among a generation of clever cynics, a real empire of perfect justice,—his thoughts turn inevitably and with strong confidence towards the future; and each victory of wrong, each failure of right, each event, each personage, which enhances his sense of moral dissatisfaction—yes, everything around him, echoes more and more articulately, in the name of justice, to the world which seems to have rejected it, the summons of the old prophet, “Prepare to meet thy God.”

But there are other rights towards which justice has duties—other rights than the rights of man. What rights may belong to the blessed intelligences of heaven it would be unpractical now and here to discuss; and yet there are higher rights—rights still more imperious and exacting than can belong to any created being. The most eloquent defenders of human rights have not seldom forgotten that there are such rights as the rights of God. Elaborate treatises on justice, which have traced the rights and duties of man with the utmost minuteness, have omitted any notice of those sovereign rights and of man's duties towards them in which, nevertheless, the higher department of justice essentially consists. The rights of God—they are not, like the rights of man, conferred rights. They belong to God, because He is what He cannot but be. They cannot but be His. God Almighty, as He is, cannot place anything beyond the limits of His own being. All that exists, exists in God. We live, move, and have our being in Him Who gave it us. We live minute by minute, because He Who gave us life so many years ago, it may be, wills, minute by minute, that we should continue to enjoy it. As our Creator then, and as our Upholder in life, God has rights over us to which there is no parallel in the relations between man and man. We cannot assign limits to these higher rights. What is each human life but a drop in the ocean of the infinite—free, no doubt, to move, to act, within certain limits, but unable to pass these limits—unable to escape for one moment from the encompassing pressure—from the inevitable sovereignty—of that mighty Hand which has given it being, and has assigned to it its place in His universe, and is really Lord of its every movement, and even now wills and has determined that at a given moment it shall die.

The rights of God. Yes, God, too, has His rights; and yet you may hear and you may read a great deal which implies that He has no rights

at all,—certainly, no such rights as you and I freely and vehemently assert for ourselves. For example, you and I have a right of communicating our thoughts to each other. We wrap up our thoughts in sound which we call language, and we pass it from mind to mind, so that it shall exist as perfectly in the mind which receives as in the mind which transmits it. Wonderful, indeed, is the mystery of language, considered as the vehicle and instrument of thought; and yet we are so familiar with this right—for such it is—of speech, that we exercise it incessantly without thinking of what we do. And yet this very right is constantly denied to God by persons, who, singularly enough, do not deny His existence. He only, it seems, must keep silence amid the millions of voices in His own universe. He only, Who has given to His creatures alike the gift of thought and the gift of speech, must be incapable, in virtue of some arbitrary doctrine which would make sure of His impotence, while it professes to be guarding His dignity—He only, forsooth, cannot disclose His mind in language. No, brethren, God has the right of revealing Himself, and He has the further right of commanding the assent of His creatures to the revelation which He makes. As the Eternal Truth, He claims the homage of the understanding of man. As the perfectly Holy One, He claims the homage of the will of man. As the Eternal Beauty, He claims the homage of the affections of man. He asks for these things at our hands. He gives us the power, the awful, the momentous power, of refusing his request; but He asks us not to indulge a taste or a sentiment, but to do justice to a right. Yes, we owe to God's revelation of Himself such tribute as our intellects and hearts can give as a simple matter of justice. God has the right to be believed by us when He speaks. When He unveils His character and attributes, He has the right to be loved by us, while in loving Him we may indeed find that our first strict duty is also the secret of our truest happiness. "If He were," it has been said, "only some one work of His hands—a beautiful scene, a beautiful form or face, or an exquisite flower garden, or perhaps even a work of human art, a statue, or a painting, we should perchance give what we refuse to the invisible, to the transcendental Beauty, to Whose glory all that most powerfully affects the eye of sense here below is but the very faintest ray."

The rights of God. As the last six commandments of the Decalogue affirm by guarding the rights of man, so do the first four guard and affirm the rights of God. First comes the right of God to the highest place in the thoughts and affections, the inmost being, of the creature. "I am the Lord thy God." Next, the right to exclude all rival claimants, whether framed by the hands or by the imagination of man. Then, in the third commandment, the right to claim a reverent recognition of His presence, as hearing every word that touches Himself: and lastly, in the fourth, the right to a certain proportion of time to be devoted by His

reasonable creatures to acknowledging by prayers and thanksgiving and praise the real relation which exists between themselves and Him. And here, therefore, we may see how the imperfect and narrow conception of justice, which confines it to promoting right relations between man and man, has to be considered and readjusted so as to include right relations between man and the infinite Being Who made him. When we refuse faith and love which God knows that we might give Him,—when we omit prayer, and give neither time nor thought to the claims of God, we do really sin against justice, not less surely than when we take that which belongs to another man, or bear false witness, or take a human life. For God has His rights, too, as man has his, and to be just is to satisfy all rights whatever—the rights of man, assuredly, but also, not less certainly, the rights of Him from Whom all human rights are gifts—the rights of the self-existent and perfect Being Who made us.

And this, too, was felt by Amos, for Amos is the prophet of an absolute and adequate justice—not merely of a justice between man and man, but also of justice as between man and God. And, as in the days of Amos, Samaria was the spot in Israel at which justice between man and man was most conspicuously violated, so Bethel was the spot of Israel at which most of the wrong was done to the rights of God. There was the centre of the idolatrous worship set up and patronised, for reasons of state, by the reigning dynasty ; and there, we may be pretty sure, Amos stood when again and again he proclaimed that this standing injustice towards God, the King and the Friend of Israel, must entail a judgment. There he uttered the stern irony, “Come to Bethel and transgress, and bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes after three years, and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings ; for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel saith the Lord God.” There, no doubt, in his Master’s name, he uttered the scathing words : “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from Me the noise of thy songs : I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” Thence it was that Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to the King Jeroboam the second, saying, “Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel,” and bade Amos, “O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there. But prophesy not again any more at Bethel, for it is the king’s chapel : it is the king’s court.” And there Amos uttered the reply, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son, but I was an herdman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit : and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel. Now, therefore, hear thou the word of

the Lord. Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Thy wife shall be as an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line, and thou shalt die in a polluted land, and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth out of his land."

Now, in the eyes of Amos the accumulating injustice of Israel towards God was ever making it more and more inevitable that Israel and God should meet in judgment. Israel, in its blind self-love, might think that some great crisis in its history, which the prophets call "the day of the Lord," could not but be to its advantage; but Amos, who had traced and watched the persistent and deep disloyalty of these people to their true King, knew that it must be otherwise. "Woe unto you," he cries, "that desire the day of the Lord. To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Amos knew, as we Christians should know, that the ever-swelling tide of mental and moral rebellion against the Ruler of the universe is by a law which cannot fail to assert itself bringing His judgment, whether temporal or final, nearer and nearer. It is not merely in the obedience of the saints, in the conversion of penitents, in the extension of the Divine kingdom, that we Christians see the tokens of the approaching advent. It is in the contemptuous rejection of the rights of God by populations of Christian stock and which might be Christian still. It is in the resolute exclusion of the King of heaven from large departments of human thought and life. It is in the coarse blasphemies which meet the eye and the ear in our streets, and yet more in the refined ungodliness which underlies the graceful sentences of our well-educated infidelity; in the placid indifference to God, as if He had had His day, and it was high time to be rid of Him. Referring to the dream of Scipio, a thoughtful poet has well sung—

"How Roman conquerors who climb
Above the things of earth and time,
Forgetting human hopes and fears
Amid the music of the spheres,
Advancing into converse high
Of goodness, truth, and piety,
And of a place to spirits given
In Plato's tranquil seats of heaven."

And then he asks

"How is it now the worldly great,
Men of renown and high estate,
Turn from the soul-ennobling theme
On which e'en heathen's loved to dream?"

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Is it that truth appears so mean
Where Christ the only door is seen ?
Or that we to the dregs descend
As the world verges to its end ? ”

Yes, it is in the dregs of descending thought—it is in the fall of intellectual stars from the moral heavens—it is in the waxing cold of the love of many, that Christians may trace, do trace, the predestined signs of the last catastrophe. It is nearer they say, than when we believed. In these portents faith sees that which must rouse and consolidate a force which, in its turn, to speak reverently, must exert an increasing pressure on the will of the All-Holy tending, as the years and months and days and moments pass, to bring us closer and closer to the threshold of the judgment. From these, too, one warning, dictated by the necessities of the eternal justice, is ever uttered to the world, “Prepare to meet thy God.”

And yet, brethren, it is not in the outer world only, or chiefly, that you and I may trace the pressure of the law of justice, as vindicating the rights of God and the rights of man, and imperiously demanding some final, though it be a penal, satisfaction. It is not in the great events which interest and move mankind, or in the characters, which may arrest the gaze of a generation, or in the public iniquities which may seem to triumph, or in the conspicuous goodness which may be doomed, in appearance, to rejection and to shame. It is not on the great scene of the world's history, but within our souls, that the tragic requirements of justice as vindicating the rights of God and the rights of man will most make themselves felt. There is much within every one of us here, if we will let it speak, which says solemnly, sternly, at some times in our lives, “Prepare to meet thy God.” If we hear not this voice now we shall hear it hereafter,—if not in rude health, yet, unless the moral nerve has been cauterised to death—when we are sick or dying. What a lurid gleam of light is that which passed across the death-bed of Cromwell ! His moral sense had been a while drugged by the then popular theory of an absolute, or mechanical assurance ; and as, perchance, he was haunted by some dark spectres which the scaffold at Whitehall, or Drogheda, or Wexford, might well suggest to a man who felt himself to be passing into the presence of the everlasting Judge, he asked the Puritan ministers around his bed whether any who had once been assured of salvation could be finally lost. Then assuredly, if not before, if thought and conscience still exist, the memory of what has been done or left undone in respect of the rights of God and the rights of man will utter, as never before, the warning, “Prepare, O soul, to meet thy God.”

And so this suggests two duties always incumbent, but especially at the advent season.

The first is the duty of self-examination. We must try before we die to get out of the world of fancy, as far as our souls are concerned, into

the world of fact. We must endeavour to see in ourselves whether we are on the road to heaven—where we are on the road to heaven—what we are in the sight of God. We must try to strip off something of the thick coating of illusion with which the soft words of friends and our own self-love have clothed and swaddled our souls while yet we may. Every day a little portion of time—five or ten minutes—should be given to this work. It will rouse conscience to a new life. It will quicken prayer. We shall know what to pray about. It will enable us, though it may be in tears and in sorrow, to think steadily of what is implied by the law of justice in its bearings on the history of our own souls—on their future destiny. If we would thus judge ourselves, we should not be judged, for thus, as in no other way so well, should we prepare to meet our God.

And the second and last duty is the duty of claiming, as Christians may and should claim, a part in the perfect righteousness or justice of Jesus Christ. Alone among the sons of men He did justice, perfect justice, both to the rights of man and to the rights of God. There was no claim upon Him which he ever so slightly contravened—no duty which He failed by ever so little to satisfy. And thus Stephen, in his dying speech, calls Him the Just One; and St. John, in his First Epistle, “Jesus Christ the righteous;” and St. Peter says that He “did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;” and St. Paul, that, “He was made sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Yes, the satisfaction which He, our Redeemer, offered in His life and in His death to the law of justice is not—such is His grace—a solitary triumph or possession of His own, for in His condescending love He allows us, He bids us, to share it. Such is His representative character as the new head of the race, as the second Adam, that if we will His justice may be ours. He invites us to hold out the hand of faith that we may receive that righteousness of God which He has thus won for each and all of us. And as we do thus say, “Eternal Father, I, the creature of Thy hand, and redeemed by the blood of Thy Son, offer Thee His perfect righteousness, and entreat Thee to clothe me in it, that I may be beheld and accepted in the Beloved,” so He both accounts and makes (accounts because he makes) us righteous by virtue of those powers of the new life which are communicated by the touch of the Redeemer, acting by His Spirit, and through His sacraments, on the souls of men. And then we enter upon the magnificent freedom of the law of justice. Then we discover that the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death;” for what the natural or Mosaic law “could not do, in that it was weak” through the conditions of our fallen nature, “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law”—the practical recognition of the rights of God, and of the rights of man—

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"might be fulfilled in us, even in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Yes, first, self-examination, and then, when we see our deep needs, the claim for a share in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Thus may we face the remaining years, if there be any, with hope, and peace, and joy. Thus may we meet that hour for which we have been prepared by the voice of the Eternal Justice, speaking to our consciences, and leading us, like the old Mosaic law, to the Divine Redeemer—the voice which never, never ceases to whisper to the sons of men, "Prepare to meet thy God."

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."

AN APPEAL TO DESIRE.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(CANON OF ST. PAUL'S,)

Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 22nd, 1878.

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—AMOS iv. 12.

PRUDENCE, justice, reverence—these virtues have been considered in succession, as they may help us men to prepare for meeting God in death and judgment. True prudence is also justice—justice towards God, and justice towards men. And true justice is also reverence—is the acknowledgement that God is what he is. Yet, neither prudence, nor justice, nor reverence, seems to furnish us with the deepest motive for preparation. Prudence, justice, reverence, are in different ways allied to, or based on, fear—fear of consequences—fear of some law of retaliation—fear of an awful, and, as yet, unvisited world. Brethren, we could not end here even if there were less than four Sundays in Advent, and so to-day we pass to an aspect of the subject which you will already have anticipated. What do the words "Prepare to meet thy God" say to us when they are confronted with that mysterious and pervading element in our nature which in its lower forms we call desire, and, in its higher, love?

We have already seen that the instincts of prudence, justice, and reverence are original elements of the nature which our Maker has given us, and that they are subsequently raised, mainly by that heavenly influence which we call grace, but also by our faithfulness to God's leading, to the rank of commanding excellences, shaping life and controlling the issues of destiny. And thus it is also with the feature of our common human nature which is before us to-day. Every human being is endowed with a certain proportion of desire; that is to say, with an impulse to seek after something that is beyond him as necessary to his perfect satisfaction and his perfect well-being. Desire is just as much an original endowment of man as his reason. We have no experience whatever of any single human being coming into this world without it. Desire in a moral and self-governing agent like man is what

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gravitation is in a material body. It is a force which determines the man's relations to the beings and objects around him. It is, according to the difference between the objects on which it is fixed, the raw material both of virtue and vice. And thus it has much more to do with the issues of life and destiny than has even reason. Reason may be very active, and yet have no influence whatever upon conduct and character. This was the case with the founder of the inductive philosophy, Francis Bacon, the “greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind.” But desire cannot be active without moulding character profoundly in whatever direction. Nay, desire determines the direction in which a moral being is moving; and thus, speaking generally, desire may be regarded under two main aspects—when it is moving towards its one true object, and when it is not.

Granting the general truth of what has been said, the question arises. What is the object which desire was intended to seek? No believer in God can hesitate about the answer to that question; and to-day we need not concern ourselves with enquiring what those who, unhappily, do not believe in God have to say about this or other features of human nature.

Desire is meant, first of all, to keep man loyal to the Being who made him. Doubtless, according to the constitution of our nature, desire has a great many important and legitimate objects which are short of God. A good appetite, for instance, and a love of study or inquiry, are both lawful forms of desire. But the object or desire in the form of a good appetite is, or should be, the preservation of health and strength with the ultimate view of promoting, through these, God's glory in this his world. And the object of desire in the form of enthusiasm for study or enquiry is, or should be, the acquisition of truth—truth which must, by whatever paths, lead up to God, in whom all the paths of sincere inquiry ultimately meet, as in the absolute or supreme truth. In other words, God himself is the ultimate object of desire. He meant to be so. He gave us desire that it might be so. Desire is the force intended by the Creator to keep his reasonable creature loyal to himself as the centre, or as the object and end, of his being. Just as the planets revolve in obedience to necessary law round their central sun, so souls are designed to revolve in the moral sphere around the Sun of Righteousness, being held each in his orbit by the force of desire. Or, rather, just as any small meteoric mass in the near neighbourhood of this earth cannot but draw near to it, in obedience to what we call the law of gravitation, so souls are impelled by desire or love of God, and freely as moral beings, yet incessantly, to move towards him as their centre of moral gravitation. There is an old motto—(I cannot remember whose it is)—which states this truth with epigrammatic point—“*Quocunque feror amore feror*”—“Whithersoever I am borne, it is love that bears me.” Desire or love is, in fact, the impelling motive. It is, if you will, the weight which determines the gravitation of a soul. It determines both the direction and the range of its movement, and when desire achieves its original purpose then we call it the love of God. This, in their days of innocence, was the governing force in our first parents. This is the governing force in Christians who live according to the law of Christ, in whom he has formed and developed “the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” They gravitate by desire and love towards God. The motto of their lives is “Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.”

Desire or love, then, is intended to be directed upon God, to keep the soul true to him—to bring it in the end into everlasting union with him.

But human nature, as we find it, is like a beautiful instrument in which everything has been more or less dislocated and put out of gear by some terrible shock; and thus desire in us fallen men, instead of concentrating itself upon God, lavishes itself, like a thoughtless spendthrift, upon anything and everything that is not God. No created object is too debased to fail sooner or later of attracting, and, as it shatters itself into separated and awfully conflicting jets of lawless impulse, it becomes what we know as the passions, and it results in the sins of our everyday life. Murder, adultery, theft—these are the products of misdirected desire—of desire lawlessly concentrating itself upon some created object, and breaking down the moral barriers which forbid indulgence in its impetuous onset. Desire or love which has ceased to be loyal to God is like a railway engine which is off the line while the steam has not yet been turned off, and it has not yet encountered any obstacle capable of bringing it to a standstill. Its surviving force is the exact measure of the danger which it threatens to the human freight behind it. And desire which is no longer given to God is more perilous even than moral apathy, in so far that it may commit the soul more irretrievably to evil. A soul, the force of whose desire is no longer directed upon God is, in the moral world, what a planet would be in the material heavens, if it could leave its orbit, and dart about through space in a course of wild destructive eccentricity. St. Jude speaks of a tribe of such souls in his day as wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, and St. James supplies the reason for this very stern language when he tells us that desire—meaning thereby desire which is detached from God, its true object, and is spending itself upon created things—desire “when it has conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.” Thus, according to St. James, desire, when no longer directed upon God is the active principle which generates sin. Nay, St. James says that desire is the mother, and sin the child; and assuredly sin the child is very like its mother, for the common word which is used in the original of the New Testament for sin means an act which misses the true mark or aim of life, that is to say, which misses conformity with his will who is the author and end of our existence.

The object of religion, then, is, if possible, to restore desire—this fund of motive force—to its true track, its true direction, and, having restored it, to maintain it there. To this great object, sermons, prayers, sacraments, all that illuminates the understanding, all that touches the heart, all that presses the will, is persistently directed, for in this rectification, as I may call it, of desire, the excellence of man mainly consists. There is a famous definition of virtue, which the Christian church owes to the religious genius of St. Augustine. He calls it “order in love,”—in other words, regulated desire; Augustine clearly saw that if this formidable ingredient of our nature could only be ordered well—ordered conformably with the laws of God, all else would settle itself soon and rightly; and therefore he called virtue regulated desire; not regulated reason, which is possibly consistent with vice, but regulated desire,—not extinguished desire, not even impoverished desire, because desire is wanted as the soul’s motive force, but desire moving ever with all its strength and impulse—moving according to the original rule of the Creator—moving among, without being detained by, the creatures around it—moving orderly, onwards and upwards, towards the everlasting throne.

It is not meant that this result can be brought about only or mainly by human agency. Experience might tell us this if we have ever tried our hands at the work, and St. Paul says that “the love of God”—in other

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words, desire regulated, reinforced, purified, so as to seek its true object, "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." St. Paul is just as much alive as St. James to the havoc which is worked in fallen human nature by unregulated and degraded desire. He says that here is the cause why the Mosaic law, in itself, holy, and just, and good, became to man an occasion of sin. Rebellious desire took offence, it appears, at the law's restrictions upon its wayward license. Desire is that other law in the members which wars, so he tells us, against the law of his mind; and if desire is to be baptized, if it is to be given its true direction, surely a stream of fire from heaven must be poured forth into the soul to effect the change, to purify, to illuminate, to elevate,—above all, to direct, to bid the impulse which has, as concupiscence, looked for long downwards and earthwards, raise its gaze to heaven, and become the love of God.

Here, then, let us endeavour to determine the nature of the appeal which the message of Amos, "Prepare to meet thy God," makes to this important element of our nature, desire.

"Prepare to meet thy God." When desire is alienated from God, and is spent on created objects, as if they were adequate and satisfactory, these words cannot but carry with them a very solemn meaning. They mean evidently, at least this,—“Prepare, O man, for a meeting which will show thee that thy life has been a vast mistake—that thy endowment of desire has been expended upon what is worthless or worse than worthless,—that thou hast neglected and forgotten the one Being who is really worthy its efforts. Prepare for this discovery, when thy vital force is ebbing or gone—when the shadows are falling thick around thee—when it is practically too late for recovery, for retreat to prepare to meet thy God, for if thou art to meet him in peace, much preparation, assuredly, is necessary. He does not tolerate the expenditure upon creatures of that mysterious and powerful ingredient in thy nature which he made that by it he might draw thee upwards to himself. He has told thee that he is a jealous God; that he will not give his honour to another. He would not be himself if he could do this. Thou must, therefore, choose, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, and the world passeth away, and the desire thereof.' Think of that coming moment—that moment of disenchantment—that moment of dismay, and while thou mayest, prepare.”

This is the warning, but to obey it is not easy for anyone of us. Desire alienated from God, and moving among created objects which attract it, is like Israel among the conquered Canaanites, the slave of that which it should control. “They were mingled among the heathen and learned their works, inasmuch as they worshipped their idols, which turned to their own decay.” In order to set desire free to return to its original direction, God has an agency at command in this his human world which has indeed other work to do, of which much else may be said, but by which this special work of detaching desire from the unsatisfying objects which woo it is commonly effected. That agency is pain. What a mystery, if we think of it, is pain in a world which a perfectly benevolent Being has made and governs. How little does pain correspond to anything that we could have anticipated? How little do we understand what it is in itself. We know it when we feel it ourselves. We recognize its presence by its effects on others. We know and

can analyse many of the causes, physical and mental, which invariably produce it ; but the sensation itself, as distinct from its immediately antecedent cause, is quite beyond us. We cannot take it to pieces. We cannot give any sort of account of it. There it is. We can but feel it as a simple sensation. No immaterial visitant from another world, who could make his presence overwhelmingly plain to us, would more certainly elude our efforts to understand all about him than does pain ; and pain is sent—let us be quite sure of it—with a purpose as distinct and beneficent as that of any angel that ever came from heaven. Doubtless, it is found far beyond the frontiers of the human race, and what it may or may not do for the lower creatures, who have a very large share of it, is an interesting and pathetic, but not now, and for us, profitable speculation. Even within the human family, pain is sometimes a faithful watch-dog which denotes the near approach of danger,—sometimes a penal visitant, executing a stern sentence, which, as conscience whispers, is deserved. But, more frequently, pain is, or may be, a wise friend who puts his hand on our shoulder, and bids us think—bids us think about a great many things of which we think too little, but especially about this grave matter of misspent and misdirected desire. Pain is the disappointment and the defeat of desire, arising either from the discovery that an object is worthless, or that it is vanishing. When the prodigal son was in the far country his best friend was pain ; and, when pain had done its work of disenchantment, desire could turn back on its true direction. “ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” And this was Israel’s experience long before the birth of Amos, as we may have learnt from the psalm which occurs in the church service of yesterday afternoon. Much of the early life of Israel was a long alternation of heart-apostasies from God and of disciplinary suffering. And in Amos’s day the life of the ten tribes was shaped throughout by lawless desire. In Israel, desire had spent itself without reserve, on wealth, on luxury, on sensual indulgence, on political ambitions, on everything, in short, but God. The houses of hewn stone, the pleasant vineyards, the beds of ivory, the melody of vials, the bowls of wine, the costly ointments which Amos mentions, were in themselves or in their associations, so many attractions to unregulated desire. When the ten tribes broke away from the religious centre of the nation, the desire of Israel, as a people, was alienated from God ; and God then, as now, mercifully corrects alienated desire by destroying or removing its objects. Mark the plaintive monotony of those verses, which, in another connection, were quoted on a previous Sunday, where the prophet describes the successive punishments of Israel’s godless desire, and the failure of these punishments to achieve their purpose. The luxury of life, prevalent in Israel, was punished by famine : “ I have given you leanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Israel’s avarice in trade was punished by drought : “ Also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to harvest ; so two or three cities wandered to one city, to drink water, but they were not satisfied ; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord,” Israel’s unthankful delight in landed prosperity was punished by a general blight : “ I have smitten you with blasting and mildew. When your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Israel’s joyous abounding confidence in rude health and military

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prowess were punished by wasting disease, and by defeat in battle: “I sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt. Your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up into your nostrils; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” Their confident satisfaction in their city, their homes—their settled order of things around them, as though these were visible warrants for forgetfulness of God, and worthy objects of the soul’s best enthusiasm—was punished by the unwonted terrors of an earthquake, accompanied, it would seem, by volcanic eruptions: “I have destroyed some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” And because all these judgments had failed to restore to God the alienated desire of Israel, another judgment more ruinous—more comprehensive—it is not said what—was still impending. “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

As yet, then, pain, has not, as Amos complains, done its destined work for Israel, by turning misspent desire back upon its true object—back upon God. That, indeed, enhanced the tragic character of Israel’s position. The remedy had been applied, and as yet the disease had not yielded to the treatment. But all the great penitents of sacred history, like him of the parable, have witnessed to the providential efficacy of pain, whether mentally or bodily, in detaching desire from unworthy objects. So it was with David when his child was taken away. So with the Magdalen when she washed with her tears the feet of Jesus. So with the dying thief when, exhausted by a lingering agony, he prayed that he might be thought of in the kingdom of the Crucified. So in later years it was with Augustine, first a philosophical libertine, then a penitent, then first among the teachers of the church since the age of the apostles. For many reasons St. Augustine’s “Confessions” will be a classical work in the church to the end of time. But the special interest of the book is this: It is a history of the disenchantment—a history of the rectification—of desire through the agency of pain (sometimes it was mental pain)—the pain which arises from unsatisfied longings after a truth or a perfection which is never reached. Sometimes it was weariness of the body, which disgusts men with the present life, and turns their thoughts upwards and onwards. But the nett result is stated in a saying which is well worth remembering, since it puts Augustine’s philosophy of life into a very small compass, and, at the same time, has condensed for all Christian time the mighty result of his experience—“Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee!”

“Prepare to meet thy God.” The action of God upon a soul in which desire has been spent upon unworthy objects is not merely a negative one. He does not merely show it what cannot satisfy. He has positive attractions in store for it, which will do their work, if there is no active reluctance or resistance on the side of the soul. Amos is full of assurances as to the satisfactions which God has in store for Israel. We do not, indeed, find in Amos that pathetic tenderness which is characteristic of the revelations of his contemporary Hosea. But again and again Amos even passionately recalls the desire of Israel to its true object: “Seek ye me”—he is speaking for God—“Seek ye me, and ye shall live, but seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal.” Or “Seek the Lord and ye shall live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph and devour it.” Or again, “Seek him that maketh the seven stars

and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. The Lord is his name." Or again "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live, and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you." Certainly God acts upon alienated desire, first of all, by the discipline and experience of pain. But he also offers it a love which draws it upwards in its true direction—towards himself. That which provokes love is love. The human heart easily returns an affection of which it feels itself to be the object. It rouses itself with difficulty to love an invisible being, because he is what he is—worthy of all possible affection. It is not so much because God is lovable as because he has loved us from everlasting that we in our weakness are most readily enabled to return his love. "We love him," says St. John, "because he first loved us." God so loved this human world that he gave his only begotten Son to enlighten and to save it. Love is no abstract unfruitful emotion. Love is eminently energetic. With God, as always and everywhere, life is the gift of love. "God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "Herein perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And therefore, says the apostle Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead, and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." It was the love of God as shown to man in Jesus Christ—incarnate, teaching, crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, but, pre-eminently, in Jesus Christ crucified, which was to win back to God in the form of a pure, self-sacrificing love, the truant desire of humanity. And it has done this with the true representatives of Christendom—the great servants of God who have appeared from age to age. They are various in character, various in attainment, but there is one mark which is always upon them: they love God. Christ has perfectly won their hearts by that supreme expression of love—his own self-sacrifice on Calvary. And as one after the other they traverse the centuries, whatever be their station, or repute, or accomplishments, or country, they repeat by their acts, as in their words, "We love him because he first loved us." In these men desire has recovered the place which was designed for us; desire is the attractive force which binds them to the centre around which they move—the force which draws them onwards to the Being who is the end of their existence.

"Prepare to meet thy God." Surely the words bid us detach desire from unworthy and unsatisfying objects while yet we may. They bid us attach desire to the one object which can everlastingly satisfy us, the Being who made us, revealed in and present in his adorable Son. They bid us, while we may, wed desire to understanding—that true understanding of the real meaning and conditions of our existence which God gives to those, as he has said, who keep his law with their whole heart. Desire and understanding are the parents of will. Will, after all, is but intelligent desire, and will is, or should be, the monarch among the faculties of the regenerate soul, shaping life in accordance with the apprehension of its true purpose; demolishing or surmounting the obstacles which oppose themselves to the attainment of that purpose; bringing circumstances, habits, passions, even reason, into harmonious co-operation for the attainment of the true end of man. "Prepare to meet thy God." Yes. When will is supreme in a regenerate soul, even the crooked places are made straight, and the rough

places plain, as of old across the desert for the passage of God. Everything is welcomed, because everything, either as an assistance or as a discipline, must further one purpose—that of reaching the supreme object of desire, the vision of God.

Not less welcome is death. Death leads the way to him for whom the soul longs.

“How pleasant are thy paths, O death !
Like the bright slanting west,
Thou leadest down into the glow
Where all those heaven-bound servants go,
Ever from toil to rest.
How pleasant are thy paths, O death !
Thither, when sorrows cease,
To a new life, to an old past,
Softly and silently we haste
Into a land of peace.
How pleasant are thy paths, O death !
Straight to our Father's home ;
All loss were gain that gained us this,
The sight of God, that single bliss
Of the grand world to come.”

Yes, this is the true work of Advent—the true work of life—preparation—preparation of many other faculties, if you will, but especially, dear brethren, of desire in order that, transfigured as love—the love of God revealed in his blessed Son—it may be more than a conqueror—in order that, loving God above all things, we may obtain his promises which exceed all that we can desire.

THE VIRGIN'S SON.

A Sermon

By the REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 29TH, 1878.

"Now all this was done that it may be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."—*MATT. i. 22, 23.*

MANY readers of the Bible must have been struck by the reason which St. Matthew here gives for the occurrences connected with the birth of Jesus Christ,—“All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet.” We are, perhaps, tempted to whisper to ourselves that the event predicted is surely more important than the prediction, and that it would have seemed more natural to say that the prophecy existed for the sake of the event than the event for the sake of the prophecy—more natural to say that Isaiah's utterance was meant to prepare the world for Jesus Christ than that the birth of Jesus Christ was designed to justify Isaiah by fulfilling his words. But, in truth, both the prophecy and its fulfilment were from God, and the independent and higher importance of the event does not really interfere with its being a certificate of the prophet's accuracy. There were other reasons, no doubt, for the birth of Jesus Christ of a virgin mother. But one reason for it was this—that it was already foretold and on Divine authority; and it fell in with St. Matthew's formal plan throughout his gospel to insist upon this particular reason, for he here is writing for Churches made up almost, if not quite, of converts from Judaism, and he is concerned at almost every step of his narrative to show that the life of Jesus in all its particulars corresponded to what the Jewish prophecy, as understood by the Jews themselves, had said about the coming Messiah; and so he begins at the beginning—with the birth of Christ, and he says that Jesus was born just as Isaiah had said that the Christ would be born, and, among other reasons, because Isaiah had said so. Those first Jewish Christians might feel wonder, even scandal, when first they heard of the embarrassment of St. Joseph, and of the angelic assurances, but they had only to open the roll of prophecy to find that the history had been accurately anticipated. “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with

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child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel which, being interpreted, is, God with us." In St. Matthew's eyes, then, Isaiah is almost as much the historian as he is the prophet of the Lord's nativity. But is it clear that, when Isaiah uttered the words that are quoted, he meant to predict such an event as Matthew records? It has been suggested that this was not really Isaiah's meaning—that Isaiah had in view some other event at once to his own times, and more ordinary and commonplace in its character than the birth of the Redeemer, and that St. Matthew accommodates the prophet's language, by a kind of gentle pressure, to the necessities of the supernatural account which he is himself narrating. And the main reason which is urged for this view of Isaiah's meaning is that, if we look to the circumstances under which his prophecy was uttered, it is difficult to think that so distant an event as the birth of the Messiah would have at all served his purpose in giving a sign to Ahaz.

What, then, were the circumstances which led Isaiah to proclaim, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel"?

Ahaz, the king of Judah, was besieged in his capital by the allied forces of Israel and Syria, under their kings, Pekah and Rezin. These kings were really leagued against the rising Empire of Assyria, but they thought that they would best consolidate their own power in Western Palestine by deposing the reigning family of David from the throne of Jerusalem, and setting up a vassal monarch (the son of Tabeal, he is called,) on whose services they could reckon in the approaching struggle with Assyria. Isaiah was sent to encourage Ahaz and his son to make a stout resistance, and to assure them that, notwithstanding the project of the allied kings, God would be faithful to his covenant with the house of David. These associated kings, Isaiah said, need occasion Ahaz no sort of anxiety. They were like brands that were nearly burnt out. There was no Divine force in Syria; there was no political future for Israel. Ahaz had only to trust God, and all would be well. Ahaz was silent—silent because he was suspicious and distrustful; and then Isaiah bade him ask for some token which might assure him of God's presence with and goodwill towards him. "Ask thou a sign of the Lord thy God. Ask it either in the depth or in the height above." Had Ahaz then asked for a token of God's goodwill towards himself personally, or his immediate descendants, it would, no doubt, have been granted; but Ahaz was bent on an irreligious policy of his own. He thought that, by the aid of Syria, he would be able to do without the God, without the religion, of his ancestors. He looked at God and his prophets as, in some sense, his personal enemies, who thwarted his plans; and he did not wish to commit himself by asking for a sign to a creed and to a system with which he hoped to have parted for ever. And yet Ahaz, standing before the prophet, could not refuse to say anything. He must accept or decline the invitation to ask for a sign. He declined to ask; and as irreligious people often do in like circumstances, he pleaded a religious scruple as the reason for his refusal. The old law had warned Israel against tempting God by asking for new evidences or signs of sufficiently attested truth: and Ahaz, who had freely resorted to the forbidden arts of necromancy, gravely pleads this entirely insincere reason to account for his resolve. "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." And then it was that Isaiah spoke, not without righteous anger, to Ahaz and his son: "Hear ye now, O house of David. Is it a small thing for you to weary men? But will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign." A sign would be given, but Ahaz could now no longer determine its drift and character. A sign would be given which would show how God would be true to his promises to David; but it would not reassure the degenerate descendants of David as to their dynastic interests. The earthly throne of David might perish utterly, but the promise made to David of an unfailing empire would still be safe, though it would be fulfilled in a distant age, and by an unthought-of agency. And just as Moses was assured that God had sent him by the sign of a future event—the complete deliverance from Egypt, which, at the time, must have seemed strictly impossible—so religious Jews of Isaiah's day (and it was for them that Isaiah was

really now speaking) were to be assured of the safety of the great religious interests entrusted to the house of David, by a sign or predicted wonder without any parallel in history, but designed to convince them that God might punish the rebellious kings of Judah, and yet work out the promised salvation of Israel and of the human race. "Behold," Isaiah cries, as he gazes across and into the centuries—as he gazes at a picture which passes as if present before his soul—"Behold *the virgin*"—the language shows that he is speaking of one in particular—"Behold, *the virgin* is with child, and beareth a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel."

It was, then, no part of Isaiah's plan to give a sign which should assure Ahaz of present deliverance. He had done that before in plain language; and, when he utters the prophecy quoted by St. Matthew, he has altogether other and higher objects before him, the nature of which must be determined, not by the real or supposed state of mind of Ahaz, but by the natural force of the prophet's words.

Here, then, let us consider the importance of the event to which Isaiah thus looks forward, and which the Evangelist describes as fulfilled.

This importance is seen, first of all, in the strictly preternatural character of the occurrence itself. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." The foil to this prediction is the universal law by which our race is transmitted from age to age—that a child must have two human parents. St. Matthew is explicit in his account of the events which preceded our Lord's birth; but it has been contended that the word which Isaiah uses, and which is translated "virgin," may mean a young but married woman. If this were the meaning, it is difficult to see why there should be any allusion to the child's mother at all, since the predicted child would have been born like all other children, and would not be a sign in the sense of the prophet. But the original word for "virgin" is used of Rebecca before her marriage with Isaac, and of Miriam the maiden sister of the infant Moses; and, in the four other places in which it is found in the Old Testament, there is no reasonable ground for thinking that any but unmarried women are meant. I do not forget the names of scholars who, moved, as it would seem, by extraneous considerations, have disputed the accuracy of our present translation; but one fact in connection with it is instructive, and may throw a great deal of light upon the temper of recent criticism. When the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek was made some two centuries at the least before our Lord, in Alexandria, and nothing was supposed to be at stake, the Jewish translators rendered this word of Isaiah by "virgin;" but when, in the second century of our era, Aquila, a Jewish proselyte of Sinope, having his eye fixed upon the Christian appeal to Jewish prophecy, undertook a new translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek, he rendered it by "a young woman." If the point could be decided by the natural force of language, without deference to the claims of Christianity, or without an eye to the possibility of the supernatural, then there would not be much room for doubt upon the subject.

The birth of Jesus Christ is not unfrequently discussed in our day as the birth of a great man, but without reference to the virginity of His mother. Isaiah's prediction and St. Matthew's narrative are passed over as if they were not of much importance to an estimate of the event. My brethren, it is necessary to say plainly that the account in the Gospel is either true or false. If it is false, it ought to be repudiated by every honest man as a baseless superstition. If, as we Christians believe, it is true, then it is a very momentous truth. Then it implies a great deal more than is to be expressed by saying that the Son of the Virgin was a great or extraordinary man. It carries us beyond the limits of nature, of ordinary experience, into the preternatural. Doubtless, here and there in the heathen world, there were legends of sages and of poets who were born of virgins, but these legends are related to the history of our Saviour's birth as are false miracles to the true. As the counterfeit miracle implies the real miracle of which it is the counterfeit, so the idea of a virgin birth here and there discernible in Paganism points to a deep instinct of the human race, and to the high possibility that the absolute religion would satisfy

it. Pagans though they were, men felt the oppression and degradation of their hereditary nature. They longed for some break in the tyrannical tradition of flesh and blood ; they longed for the appearance of some being who should still belong to them, yet in a manner so exceptional as to be able to inaugurate a new era in the life of humanity. Revelation, surely, is not less trustworthy because it recognises an instinct which only needs men to do it justice and which is in accordance with moral truth, for here we touch upon a primary reason for our Lord's preternatural birth. If he was to raise us from our degradation, He must himself be sinless—a sinless example, a sinless sacrifice. Our Lord Himself and His apostles abundantly insist upon this—His sinlessness ; but how was it to be secured if He was to become incorporate with a race which was steeped in a mighty tradition of evil ? When, by his transgression, our first parent forfeited the robe of grace with which God had clothed him in paradise, he passed on to his descendants a nature fatally impoverished, and thereby biassed in a wrong direction, so that thenceforth, throughout all generations, evil was inherent in human nature ; evil descended like a torrent, like a bad name, like a disease, from generation to generation ; and though here and there, as with Jeremiah or the Baptist, there was a special kind of sanctification before birth, yet the millions of mankind had ever to say with David, " Behold I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me." How, then, was this fatal entail to be cut off decisively—so cut off that all should understand it ? The birth of a virgin was the answer to that question. Her Son was still human, but in Him humanity had inherited none of that bad legacy which came down across the ages from the fall ; and, surely, such a High-priest became us sinners, Himself " holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

This, indeed, is not, as you will have felt, the whole account of the matter. The birth of Jesus Christ, as we Christians believe, marked the entrance into the sphere of sense and time of One Who had already existed from eternity. At His birth, as St. Paul says, He was manifested in the flesh, but whether He is in this passage called God, or not, according to the true reading, it is thus, in any case, implied that He existed before His manifestation. The Father sent forth His Son made of a woman, as St. Paul tells us in the Epistle for to-day, but the Son existed before He was sent forth. The expression is evidently chosen to imply this, and this previous existence did not date from the creation, for " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." How was the entrance of such a Being, into this, our world, so to be marked as to show that He did not originally owe existence to a human parent ? We could not have dared to answer such a question as this beforehand. We conceive how it answered our Lord's virgin birth. Was it not natural that nature should thus suspend her laws to welcome the approach, the blessing of her Maker ?

The importance of our Lord's birth of a virgin mother is further seen in the results of His appearance. At this distance of time, we can plainly see that no other birth since the beginnings of history has involved such important consequences to the human race. We Christians have had nearly nineteen centuries in which to form comparisons and to arrive at conclusions. We have had time to take the measure of the great statesmen, soldiers, poets, teachers, who have been foremost among mankind. Who of them all has left behind him a work which can compare with that achieved by Jesus Christ ? As the first Napoleon once asked, what was the Empire of Alexander, or of Cæsar, or his own, at its best, when compared to that of Jesus Christ ? Theirs were transient ; Christ's is lasting. Theirs had soon reached a limit ; Christ's is ever extending. Theirs were based on force ; Christ's is based on convictions. Who, again, of the great men of letters has swayed the world like Jesus Christ ? Doubtless, these men too have an empire. Who can dispute the influence at this hour of Plato, of Shakespeare, of Newton ? But it is an influence which differs in kind from that of Jesus Christ. It interests the intellect, while He enchains the will. Nay, compare Him with the great teachers of false religions—with Sakya-Muni who preceded, or with Mahomet who followed Him, in human history. I do

not forget the statistics of Buddhism, or the undeniable activities of Islam, in certain portions of the Eastern world, but these religions—this is the broad fact before us—these religions are the religions of races with no real future. Christianity is still the creed of the nations which, year by year, are more and more controlling the destinies of the human race. And, if it be urged that large portions of these very nations, Christian by profession, are now abjuring Christianity, it may be replied that such apostasy, partial it may be admitted now, is in the long run, impossible. Man cannot dispense with religion, and when man has once come into contact with the highest type of religion, he has thereby exhausted the religious capacities of his nature. The absolute religion makes any after it impossible for free and sincere minds. The present efforts to replace Christianity by an imaginary religion of the future, distilled out of all the positive religions of the world, is doomed to a failure only less complete than the attempt to replace it by mere negations. There are not wanting signs of a rebound towards the faith. There are no signs whatever of a rising religious force capable of superseding it. Yes, all that is best—all that is most full of hope in the civilised world dates from the birthday of Jesus Christ. Doubtless, we owe some good and precious things which rank high in the order of nature to the old pagan days. We owe philosophy to Greece. We owe law and well-ordered life to Rome. But the idea of progress which, however it may have been misapplied, is perhaps the most fertile and energetic in modern public life—this is the creation of the Christian creed. It springs from those high hopes of the future, whether of individuals or of the race, which Christ has taught His disciples to entertain as a matter of loyalty to Himself. And the institutions which make life tolerable to the suffering classes—that is to say, to the great majority of human beings—such as hospitals—these date, one and all of them, from the appearance of Jesus Christ, and from the promulgation of those principles which He proclaimed to man with sovereign authority.

To take one point among many, the position of woman in Christian society is directly traceable not only or chiefly to our Lord's teaching, but to the circumstances of His birth. Before He came, woman, even in Israel, was little better than the slave of man. In the heathen world, as in Eastern countries now, she was a slave to all intents and purposes. Here and there a woman of great force of character joined to hereditary advantages might emerge from this chronic oppression—might become a Deborah, or a Semiramis, or a Boadicea, or a Cleopatra, or a Zenobia—might control the world by controlling its rulers. But the lot of the great majority was a suffering and a degraded one. But when Christ took upon Him to deliver man He did not abhor the virgin's womb. In the greatest event in the whole course of human history the stronger sex had no part whatever. The incarnate Son was conceived of the Holy Ghost and was born of the Virgin Mary, and therefore, in and with Mary, woman rose to a position of consideration unknown before, in which nothing is forfeited that belongs to the true modesty and grace of her nature—by which larger share of influence in shaping the destinies of the Christian races was secured to her in perpetuity. It was the incarnation which created chivalry and those better features which sweeten our modern life, and which are due to chivalry; and they, as it seems to me, are no true friends to the real influence and to the real usefulness of women who would substitute for the Christian idea of womanhood another in which woman is to compete with man in all the activities of his public life, and in the end to be relegated most assuredly to some such social fate as would inevitably follow upon an unsuccessful rivalry.

But these outward and visible results of the birth of Christ were far from being the most important. It is conceivable that such results as these might have been due to a religious genius of commanding influence, or to a man invested with miraculous powers, but still strictly, solely, a man. The birth of Jesus Christ meant more—much more than this. It was the entrance of the Word made flesh into the scene of sense and time. It was the manifestation of the incarnate Son. Before the incarnation there was a great gulf fixed between God and man. Man could think about God: he could pray to God;

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he could practise a certain measure of obedience to God's will: but, in his best moments, man was conscious of his utter separateness from God as the perfect moral being. He was conscious of sin, and this consciousness meant nothing less than separation from the All-holy. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was a bridge across the chasm which thus had parted earth and heaven. On the one hand, and from everlasting, Jesus Christ was of one substance with the Father, very and eternal God. On the other He was made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary, his mother. As the collect says, He took man's nature upon Him. When He had already existed for an eternity, He folded around Him, He made His own, a created form, a human body and a human soul, to be for ever united to His eternal Godhead. Through this, His human nature, He acts on God's behalf, upon mankind. Through this, His human nature, He pleads for man before the majesty of God, and thus there is "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." It is as man that He mediates between the Creator and the creature, between sinners and the All-holy. But His Godhead secures to His mediation its commanding power. If He were not human we at this moment should be unrepresented in heaven, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. If He were not Divine it would be impossible to say why His death upon the cross should have infinite merit, or why the body of Christ which was given for us should now in the holy sacrament preserve our bodies and our souls under everlasting life. At one and the same moment He is, as Mediator, in the bosom of the Godhead and in the closest contact with the souls of His redeemed; and this is a result of His entrance in a created form into our human world as the everlasting Son, yet, withal, as the child of Mary. That this is the deepest meaning of Christmas and of the birth of Christ is implied in the name assigned in prophecy to the Virgin's Son—the sublime, the glorious name, Emmanuel. From the day of the nativity God was seen to be with men, not simply, as heretofore, as the omnipresent, but under new and more intimate conditions. From the day of the nativity there was a change in the relations between earth and heaven. To be one with Christ was to be one with God, and this union with God through Christ is the secret and basis of the new kingdom of souls which Christ has founded, and in which He reigns. Who shall describe the wealth of spiritual and moral power which dates from the appearance of the incarnate Son in this our human world as our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption? Here and there we see, as by glimpses through the clouds, some streaks of the glory of this, the invisible kingdom of souls; but only most assuredly in another life shall we understand at all approximately what it has meant—what it means—for millions of our race.

And here, though we are still, my brethren, in truth, but on the threshold of this tremendous subject, we must make two remarks in conclusion.

Observe the contrast between the real and the apparent importance of the birth of Christ. To human sense, what took place at Bethlehem may well have seemed at the time commonplace enough. An infant was born under circumstances of hardship—was laid in a wayside stall. To those who do not look closely at what was passing, it might have occurred that a like event had happened scores of times before, and would often be repeated. Everybody then, depend upon it, did not hear the song of the angels, or mark the bearing of the virgin mother or of her saintly spouse. The kingdom of God had entered into history, but, certainly, not with observation. Nay, more, even among the worshippers of Christ the full meaning of His birth, as opening a new era in the history of the human race, was not at once, by any means, practically appreciated. For five centuries and a half, Christians still reckoned the years by the names of the Old Roman consuls, or by the era of Diocletian, just like the pagans around them. It was in the year 541 of the Christian era that Dionysius the Little, a pious and learned person at Rome, first ranged the history of mankind around the most important event in its whole course—the birthday of Jesus Christ. Christendom at once recognised the justice of this way of reckoning time; and the attempts to supersede it, such as that which was made in France during the first revolution, have never had a serious chance

of success. But how often do you and I use the phrase, "The year of our Lord," without reflecting that it proclaims the birth of Jesus Christ to be an event of such commanding importance that all else in human history, rightly understood, is merely relative to it—interesting only as it proceeds or follows, as it leads up to, or is derived from it. And yet, as I have said, five centuries and a half of the Christian ages passed before this was practically recognised. And so it has been ever since; so it is at this hour. Real importance is one thing; apparent importance is another. The events which move the world are not always those which men think about. The men who most deeply influence their fellows are not those of whom everybody is talking. The currents of thought and feeling which will shape the future are not those which are welcome, by the organs and interpreters of current opinion. When Christ appeared, the palace of Caesar seemed to be more important to the destinies of the world than the manger of Bethlehem. No, brethren, depend upon it, the apparent is not always, or even generally, the real.

And, lastly, the importance of the birth of Jesus Christ must be recognised in many ways by the student of history, by the philosopher, by the divine. But there is one aspect of it which for you and me is more pressing than any other—What is its practical meaning for us now and in the approaching future? Probably every one in this cathedral has said to himself to-day, "This is the last Sunday in 1878." Yes, brethren; the hours of this year are quickly running out, and as those of us who have reached or who have passed middle life look back on it, we are tempted to say in the phrase of the Psalmist, "I went back, and lo! it was gone. I sought it, but its place could nowhere be found." It seems now but as yesterday that we were standing here at the close of 1877; yet, since then, how much has taken place—how much has there been to think about; and, after all, thought and occupation are the wings of time. Certainly it has been a year of anxieties, a year of struggles, a year of surprises, a year of achievements, a year in which, whether for good or for evil, the nations, as the phrase goes, have been "making history." This is not the hour to discuss it controversially. Probably those who come after us will be better able than we are to bring a large knowledge and a calm impartiality to the estimate of what this year has really been to our country—to the human race. But, as it passes, it leaves us Englishmen with a double burden on our hands—widespread distress at home, which according to our means it should be our care to alleviate as we may, and one war, perhaps two wars, in our dependencies abroad. All who think at all will find in these facts matter for sober and anxious thought—reasons, it may be, for some very serious misgivings. But, as the year passes, it sweeps away with it into the abyss of history—into the great company of the dead—many whom, in private or in public, we have known so well—the aged statesman, whose long life had been spent in the ardent struggles of political party; the great missionary bishop who will rank hereafter in a distant colony with our own Augustine; the divine in whom, now that he is gone, men have traced the spirit and the genius of a Butler; the earthly head of the largest of Christian communions; and, not less, those whom we have mourned quite recently—the wife, the princess, who has shown us how high—even the highest—positions can be consecrated to God by works of charity and benevolence. Yes, they and many others, nearer it may be, and dearer, some of them, to you and me, are now among the dead. And as the passing year sweeps them with its last hours from our sight, we seem—God grant that it may be so—we seem to catch a glimpse of those great realities which we too easily all of us forget. It is certain that many who prayed and listened in this cathedral on the last Sunday of 1877 have since passed into the presence of the eternal Judge. It is certain that many who pray and listen here this afternoon will have followed them before the last Sunday of 1879. Which of us it will be we know not; but, as we think steadily on the undeniable truth, surely some of the accustomed mists of our daily life must clear away, and we must see things more nearly as they are. In that world there will be no England, but only the souls of Englishmen. In that world there will be no distinctions of race, or rank, or wealth, or accomplishments, but only

THE VIRGIN'S SON.

the great and the then ineffaceable distinction between the saved and the lost. Surely as from this vantage ground of passing time we look out into that coming world with its pleasing and terrific possibilities—with its glories, with its solemnities, with its nearness to each one of us, we must take heed that for each one of us the birth of the Redeemer shall mark—aye, ere this sacred week has gone—something more than a milestone on the road of life, something more than the occasion of a family gathering. There is one question, I repeat, which we should each of us lose no time whatever in answering, if it be not answered yet—"What is my relation to Him Who, for love of me, was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, my present and most merciful Redeemer—my future Judge?"

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